DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 717 EC 305 048

AUTHOR	Knopper, Dorothy, Ed.
TITLE	Understanding Our Gifted. Volume 8, 1996.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1040-1350
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	126p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Open Space Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268 ($35 for 1-year subscription (6 issues), individual issues $8).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT	Understanding Our Gifted; v8 n1-6 Sep 1995-Aug 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Affective Behavior; Child Rearing; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Global Approach; Internet; Middle Schools; *Multicultural Education; Parenting Skills; Parent School Relationship; *Talent; Visual Learning

ABSTRACT

This collection of six newsletter issues focuses on the educational needs of gifted students. Each issue includes the following features: "Tactics" (teaching strategies); "Parentspace" (articles from parents); "Surfing the Net" (how to find relevant information on the Internet); "Learning To Learn" (specific learning strategies); "Creative Ventures" (reading recommendations); and "Above and Beyond" (commentaries on gifted issues). Issue 1 highlights multicultural issues in gifted education. A description of a leadership program for secondary gifted and talented American Indian and Alaskan Native students is included. Issue 2 reviews topics concerning gifted students in upper elementary/middle schools. An article is included that describes the role of middle school principals in advocating for the development of gifts and talents. Issue 3 focuses on the visual learner. Articles include information on teaching techniques for visual-spatial gifted children. Issue 4 highlights common ground between parenting and teaching gifted children. Parent-teacher cooperation is discussed. Issue 5 focuses on global connections for gifted students. Articles include information on preparing students for global involvement. Issue 6 highlights the affective needs of gifted and talented students. Information is provided on the affective needs of culturally diverse students. (Most articles contain references.) (CR)

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Understanding Our Gifted. Volume 8, Numbers 1-6.
Knopper, Dorothy, Ed.

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UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED®

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

September/October, 1995

Volume 8, Issue 1

Lessons Learned from the Children

C. June Maker

The lack of appropriate instruments for assessing abilities of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has been a focus of my research for several years. As Arizona coordinator of the Systematic Training for Educational Programs for Underserved Pupils (STEP-UP) project, I have had the opportunity, along with my colleagues at The University of Arizona, to develop and begin pilot testing of a very different kind of assessment process in special classes for high potential children on the Navajo reservation.

Beginning with my definition of giftedness as ***the ability to solve the most complex problems in the most efficient, effective and/or economical ways***, and drawing upon previous research on problem solving in children and adults (Maker, 1992), we designed problem-solving activities that were novel, interesting and fun. The activities were designed to engage children in developmentally appropriate problem solving in five of the seven intelligences

(Continued on page 8)

FOCUS ON:

MULTICULTURAL ISSUES IN GIFTED EDUCATION

GUEST EDITOR
C. June Maker

INSIDE

Tactics
Joanna Schier 4

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 5

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 6

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 7

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 17

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 19

Project EAGLE: Indian Students and Parents as Partners in Leadership

Rockey R. Robbins
Stuart A. Tonemah

As American Indian tribal communities have moved closer to self-determination, there is a need for leaders who can assess tribal situations intelligently and develop creative approaches to solving problems. The primary goal of Project EAGLE, operated by American Indian Research and Development, Inc. (AIRD, Inc.), was to provide effective and appropriate leadership strategies to allow 9th- through 12th-grade gifted and talented American Indian and Alaskan Native students and their parents to work together to develop leadership potential in such areas as family, church, school and tribal community. The philosophical foundations of Project EAGLE consisted of wisdom and knowledge drawn from many sources, most importantly from values held in common among American Indians.

Program Elements
Project EAGLE offered many unique and exemplary program elements: 1) Direct involvement

(Continued on page 4)

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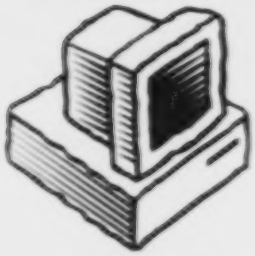
Understanding Our Gifted **(ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Open Space Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268. Subscriptions are $35 for 1 year (6 issues); Institutions $40. International subscriptions are $47 U.S. funds; International institutions $55. Back issues $8; International $10. Third class postage paid at Boulder, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *Understanding Our Gifted*, 1900 Folsom, Suite 108, Boulder, CO 80302, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission. Appropriate credit must be given.** **Copyright 1995, Open Space Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.** **(303)444-7020/FAX (303)545-6505, 1-800-494-6178.**

Between the Lines

Our field of gifted education has done a great job in recognizing—and spreading the word—that gifted children can be found in all ethnic, cultural and economic populations. But difficult barriers confront us as we struggle to find these exceptional children who may communicate in unfamiliar languages and live with different values and customs.

We are fortunate to have as Guest Editor C. June Maker, whose research has focused on appropriate instruments for assessing abilities of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. June shares some of "her" children with us as she



reinforces ***Understanding Our Gifted***'s philosophy of *mutual education*—students and teachers learning with and from each other.

Stuart A. Tonemah and Rockey R. Robbins describe the results and the human side of Project EAGLE, in which American Indian gifted secondary students and their parents worked together to develop leadership potential through creative problem solving and emphasis on tribal cultural values. It is interesting to note that both lead articles highlight children of American Indian backgrounds. Certainly this points out the existence of gifted children in that culture, and the pressing need to find and challenge them.

Tactics columnist Joanna Schier shares the diversity and the potential of the gifted children who inhabit her very special bilinqual kindergarten, while other columnists offer resources and suggestions for children from many different backgrounds.

D.K.

Tactics

The Gifted in a Bilingual Kindergarten

Joanna Schier

My bilingual kindergarten is composed of multi-ethnic or non-English-speaking children from all over the world. For new students, there is usually a "silent stage," lasting several months. Considering this, I thought it extraordinary that Jin Hee, a 5-year-old girl recently arrived from Korea, spoke right away, trying to communicate with me using her few words of English. She spent her first few days in the classroom observing, but soon her sullen look changed into something infinitely expressive, and one might have been deceived into believing that her command of English was much better than it was. Showing me a ribbon and a bow, she exclaimed, "Same, Mrs. Schier! See?" There was such intensity, intelligence and power in her gaze when she spoke! She spelled words at every opportunity, found analogies, brainstormed for initial consonant words; this child wanted to make an impact and fought for it.

For four years I've been teaching such children, many of whom arrive having had no exposure to this country and its language, or others who are born on American soil but have spent their early years in non-English-speaking homes. I have come to see my role as that of facilitator and provider of an enriched and exciting environment in which 5 year olds, regardless of their fluency level, make choices for themselves in academic and social areas. They participate in choosing the subject of study, in exploring it in depth or breadth according to their interest and often in co-organizing learning centers. I also try to accommodate each child's different modalities, as happened when we undertook an animals and plants unit that sparked the children's interest in the Earth and its environment. After demonstrating the water cycle with a kettle and vapor, it was easy for them to understand food webs and the chain of life. "And it goes round and round," sang Ki Sim, an especially bright, artistic and kinesthetic little girl, as she danced out her interpretation of the concept.

Highly intellectually gifted children like Jin Hee are generally easy to spot, no matter what the classroom setting. But identifying and serving all gifted children,

(Continued on page 4)

Tactics

Continued from page 3

whatever the degree or dimension of their gifts, should not be limited because of a bilingual or ESL situation. Spatial brilliance can be detected by providing access to construction centers, block building and Lego corners, etc. Mathematical aptitude can be discerned in observing a child's problem-solving skills, mechanical aptitude and fascination with numbers. Leadership talents are easily detected when watching the dynamics of classroom interactions. I always work with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) in mind and start from there in observing and evaluating the children.

I believe that all students' interests and unique gifts can be discovered and cherished. Some children can be identified quickly, as with Jin Hee, while with others' identification happens over time through observation and interaction. Take, for instance, Mark. Born in the United States, raised in a Russian-speaking home, this little boy came to my class with the English he'd learned from television and in his neighborhood. Initially shy and uninterested in academics, Mark turned out to be a great game organizer and plot developer for fantasy play. In the safety of our classroom, he ventured out of himself to display wonderful interpersonal skills, and the following fall he transitioned smoothly into a regular 1st grade. In a child-centered environment, it's possible to elicit an expression of a student's interest as a starting point, develop it and then branch into other areas from there.

All children need an affirmative climate in which their natural talents can come forward, blossom or be channeled in positive directions. Early on, Jin Hee seemed to view life as an exercise of intellect and a fierce competition. But with help, in large part from Mark, his gentle presence and tactful reminders about other people's needs, she came to see that the world was a place of cooperation and interdependence. By year's end, Jin Hee was writing one-page stories in English and successfully negotiating 5th-grade math. Her story is but one of many in which, thanks to the combination of her high intelligence and the recognition of and attention to it, both her academic and social lessons were assimilated quickly and with grace.

References

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: Basic Books.

Joanna Schier is a public school bilingual teacher and also teaches at the Center for Gifted at National Louis University in Evanston, Illinois. Born and educated primarily in Poland, she has traveled extensively in other countries, developing a sensitivity to the influences of various cultures on human behavior.

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 1

of parents with their children throughout every phase of the program; 2) an original leadership, psycho-educational curriculum written specifically to address American Indian parent and children's needs as whole cultural human beings; 3) combination of both current gifted educational approaches and group and family psychology; 4) emphasis on knowledge and caring as productive activities expressed through planning and implementation of a community project addressing real needs; 5) an elaborate and unique newsletter celebrating triumphs of every participant as well as covering other relevant issues.

(Continued on page 13)

Project Eagle

Project Title

Project EAGLE: Effective Activities for Gifted Leadership Education, U.S. Education Department, Office of Indian Education.

Project Duration

August, 1991 - July, 1994.

Target Population

220-230 gifted and talented secondary Indian students from 10 states: Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Minnesota and Louisiana.

ParentSpace

In the Intergalactic Neighborhood

The Exploration of Differences

If you ask my 9 year old's opinion on the feasibility of intelligent extraterrestrial life, he will answer that *of course* it's out there, it has to be. Exhibiting an earthly strain of Mr. Spock's Vulcan logic, he'll go on to explain that we just can't assume that in our universe we're it for intelligent life. It's *possible*, and what makes us think we're the only ones anyway, he asks again and again.

He makes a good point, I think, in more sectors of this galaxy than he knows.

James was almost 5 when, looking for the right educational situation for their exceptionally bright son, his parents arranged the visitations required at several schools in their area. After one such all-day visit the director told them James would never be ready to join their kindergartners because, "He can't even count yet." Another afternoon, after a visiting day at a different school, James' father called for him and was greeted by the director whose first words were, "You didn't tell us James was bilingual. What a delight he is!" This little boy had been reading and writing in both Korean and English for a year, but because Korean was used at home, he needed prompting to do some things in English.

Open to possibilities, the people at one school did a little exploration and made some valuable discoveries. The other school, which has always prided itself on the academic rigor and success of its graduates, missed by a wide, culture-blind mile the chance to number this wonderful child among its student body.

And I hear echoes of my son's voice: What makes us think we're the only ones?

Telescopes and satellites and computers, all those amazing machines, are powerful tools, providing us with information that daily multiplies our knowledge and understanding of the universe. Regardless of how much we know, or think we know, we must always remain open to the possibility of finding out something more. Intelligent life on planets in solar systems we may or may not know about? Possible. Gifted children living in neighborhoods unlike our own — poorer ones, maybe, or ones where parents and grandparents speak languages that must be translated into English? No doubt about it.

Mine is a lucky family: because of the middle-American niche we inhabit, we knew the ways and words and had the means first to identify and understand our son's giftedness, then to seek out an educational setting that suited his needs. James' family is fortunate too, though in other circumstances that gifted child might have been overlooked and underserved. Giftedness knows no neighborhood boundaries, observes no rules of color or culture or prosperity. We parents who share daily, personal lives with our own and other children; teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators, anyone who works with children in a school setting; and, emphatically, those who research, develop, write and administer the myriad of evaluative intelligence and personality tests, all of us must be sensitive to, prepared and ready to help *all* young people in need of the special attention and support the gifted require.

We can't be satisfied for a second to think that, because it's where we live, all knowledge and correct answers are to be found here on Earth. Nor should we think that all gifted kids live in our neighborhoods or speak English or conform to some other arbitrary standard of identification. Think of the loss. Instead, we have to keep looking beyond ourselves, opening up our neighborhoods to welcome new residents and skipping over dividing lines to extend our knowledge, offer help and find what treasures are there. As things are now, because of language barriers, cultural customs, test construction or some sad form of chauvinism, we too often miss the depth of talent in that lively child around the corner or overlook the sparkle and potential of the one sitting in the back row, silently waiting for a chance to show what she knows in a way that's familiar to her.

James and my son are classmates. They often discuss science, the stars and what their work will be out there. They are two boys open to possibilities, ready to leave their neighborhoods tomorrow to discover distant, unknown, but certainly intelligent, life. After all, who are they. . .

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Surfing the Net

If you have been surfing with me for the past year, you may have wondered how "surfers" find information in such a vast network. Most use "bookmarks" or "hotlinks" to mark sites that they visit frequently. When you reach a site that you want to remember, use the pointer to mark the directory item and set a bookmark by typing the letter "a." When you want to use one of your bookmarks, enter your server and type the letter "v" (vee). Your list of bookmarks will appear on the screen, and you can select one. So, here are some "bookmarks," places that I consider main links to the World Wide Web. (Keep in mind that URLs are case sensitive and do not contain spaces between the characters.)

Yahoo URL: *http://www.yahoo.com/new/*
Yahoo is the premier topical index to the WWW, classifying tens of thousands of sites by the content of their information. This page will take you to a listing of sites that have been added in the past five days; plus it has links to some of the other popular "what's new" pages offered by other services. Surf's up!

Examples of Yahoo's links include:
*Magnet Schools
URL: *http://www.yahoo.com/Education/K_12/Magnet_Schools/*
*Math and ScienceEducation@
URL: *http://www.yahoo.com/Education/Math_and_Science_Education/*

NCSA's What's New list (National Center for Supercomputing Applications)
URL: *http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/Mosaic/Docs/whats-new.htm*

This page is the place where almost all new Internet services associated with the World Wide Web announce their existence. GNN (Global Network Navigator) is assuming production and this listing is now updated every three days....a great way to waste oodles of time! What's New began as a simple service to the WWW community, and has grown into one of the most popular documents on the Web, winning the Most Important Service Concept award in The Best of the Web '94 contest.

The Department of Education
This gopher server <*gopher.ed.gov*> and WWW site <URL: *http:/gopher.ed.gov*> are links to AskERIC, the ERIC Clearinghouses, legislative information and hundreds of other useful items.

The Clearinghouse for Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides
Gopher: *gopher.lib.umich.edu*
URLs: *http://http2.sils.umich.edu/~lou/chhome.html* or *http://www.lib.umich.edu/chhome.html* or *gopher://una.hh.lib.umich.edu/11/inetdirs*
This Clearinghouse collects and develops subject-oriented guides to Internet resources. The search tools permit individuals to look for any topic. Hit the return key on the search tool and type "projects." You'll be surprised at what you get.

Gopher Jewels (TM), a catalog of gopher sites by category, offers over 2,300 pointers to information by category and a Jughead search of all menus.
Gopher: *cwis.usc.edu* (Select "Other Gophers and information Sources")

URL: *gopher://cwis.usc.edu:70/11/Other_Gophers_and_Information_Resources/Gophers_by_Subject/Gopher_Jewels*

OTHER PRIMARY LINKS
The gopher at Minnesota is called "Mother Gopher" because Gopher was originally developed there in April, 1991.
Gopher: *gopher.micro.umn.edu*
URL: *gopher://gopher.micro.umn.edu:70/1*

The WWW Virtual Library
URL: *http://www.w3.org/hypertext/DataSources/bySubject/*

Awesome Lists
(makulow@trainer.com)
URL: *http://www.clark.net/pub/journalism.awesome.html#a*

The Planet Earth Home Page
URL: *http://white.nosc.mil/info.html*

Yanoff List of Internet Services
Gopher: *darkstar.rsa.lib.il.us*
URL: *gopher://darkstar.rsa.lib.il.us:70/0/internet.dir/inet.services.txt*

Hope to see you out on the Information Superhighway real soon. Don't forget, if you have any special Internet requests, write to me in care of ***Understanding Our Gifted.***

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

Sandra Berger is the Information Specialist for Gifted Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education in Reston, Virginia. She is the author of ***College Planning for Gifted Students.***

Learning To Learn

Back to School

Investing time and effort in back-to-school organization can set the stage and the tone for a student's successful year. Pass this column along to a middle or high school student you know who might benefit from an organizational boost.

ORGANIZE YOUR LOCKER

Include:

- shelf organizers, magnetized boxes/bins, mirror
- message board (dry-erase), post-it notes
- calendar
- daily class/activity schedule
- calculator (extra batteries)
- emergency money (lunch, phone, bus)
- extra paper, pens, pencils, white-out, tissues, tape, computer disks, etc.

Plan ahead:

- Take textbooks/materials for two or three classes; don't waste time returning to your locker between every class.
- Don't give your combination to anyne who doesn't need regular access to your locker.

ORGANIZE YOUR NOTEBOOK

Save time and stress, and safeguard against lost papers: organize your notebook! Consider these suggestions and your teacher's requirements before you begin. Keep your notebook organized all the time. if you always put things in the same place, you'll save time and hassle when you need to find them.

1. Use three-ring binders whenever possible. They're easier for adding/rearranging papers than a spiral notebook.
2. Use divider sheets with pockets which allow space for unpunched handouts.
3. Place colored tabs on each class divider sheet for quick location. Organize the notebook by chronological class order using one binder for every three classes.
4. Divide each class into subsections using labeled colored paper or clear tabs. For example, for Language Arts, write on a green sheet (or use a clear tab) "Daily Work," a blue sheet "Quizzes and Tests" and a pink sheet "Writing," etc.
5. Include your name, address, phone number, classroom rules, grading procedures, grade sheets, etc.
6. Place a calendar and assignment notebook/sheets in front.
7. Keep your "To Do" list in the front pocket.
8. Keep a supply of notebook, graph and colored paper in back of binders.
9. Store pencils, lead, erasers, pens, calculator, scissors, stapler, paper clips, etc. in plastic binder zipper bags.
10. Make and maintain a grade sheet for every class, if appropriate. Include: date, assignment title or number, points possible, points earned, percent and grade received. Keep it current so you know where you stand in every class.

ORGANIZE YOURSELF

1. Find two "study buddies" per class. Exchange home phone numbers for help with missed or confusing assignments.
2. Refer to issues of *Understanding Our Gifted* for specific time management and organization skills:

March/April, 1995: "Getting Organized"

May/June, 1995: "Planning Ahead"

July/August, 1995: "Setting Priorities"

3. Know and keep copies of classroom rules.
4. Complete a 3x5 card with the following information and give it to your parent(s) in case they need to retrieve books when you are sick or locate you during the school day. This saves time going through the counselor/main office.

- locker # and location
- daily schedule: period, time, room, location, name of class and teacher
- close friends' names and phone numbers
- make time for periodic reorganization, up-dates or changes as needed

Being organized is often unfamiliar, difficult and even painful for many gifted students. However, it is a necessary life skill and worth the effort. Consider Ben Franklin's wise words: *No gains without pains.*

References

Frender, G. (1994) *Teaching for learning success: practical strategies & materials for everyday use.* Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.

Gloria Frender, an educational consultant from Colorado, has taught at elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary levels. She is the author of two books: ***Learning to Learn: Strengthening Study Skills and Brain Power*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success: Practical Strategies & Materials for Everyday Use.***

Lessons Learned

Continued from page 1

identified by Howard Gardner (1983): interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical and spatial. Decisions about children's abilities, based on observing how well they solved these problems, were made by professionals experienced in working with children and knowledgeable about their cultures and languages (Maker, 1992).

At the same time we were assessing children for placement in STEP-UP classes, we also worked closely with a large, multicultural school district in southern Arizona and a school on the Tohono O'odham Reservation. Our new assessment process was used to place children in either self-contained special classes for gifted students or pull-out programs. In all the projects, placements in special programs were based on either the new process or traditional testing using IQ scores to evaluate the relative effectiveness of both methods.

When preliminary assessments of the Discovering Intellectual Strengths and Capabilities while Observing Varied Ethnic Responses (DISCOVER) process showed it to be a better predictor of student growth in the STEP-UP classes, as well as an equally effective predictor of performance in established programs for gifted students, the current DISCOVER projects were born. DISCOVER IV, funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), provides services to children ages 3 to 5 and follow-up through grades 1 and 2. DISCOVER III, funded by the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act, is designed to serve K-12 students. Both projects involve assessment, curriculum development, and program evaluation based on Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences, my definition of giftedness and the integration of culturally relevant, rich learning experiences. Through the DISCOVER projects (Maker, Rogers, & Nielson, 1994), we are attempting to perfect the art of observing without intruding, which is often difficult for adults when observing younger people.

The program's children are diverse in many ways, some living in remote areas on reservations (three or more hours from the nearest store, in *good* weather), some in high-crime-rate areas of a mid-sized city and others on the Mexico-United States border. Their cultures consist of: Dine (Navajo), Mexican, African-American, Mexican-American, Hualapai, Tohono O'Odham, Laotian, Japanese, Chinese, Yaqui, and Northern European. Their languages include Spanish, Navajo, Yaqui, Japanese, English, Chinese and interesting combinations. Many economic levels are represented, but few, if any, of the children are from high-income families.

Just as there is cultural, linguistic and economic diversity among these children, so is there diversity in the ways they express their giftedness. They are gifted in different ways (Gardner, 1983), which are at once separate but interactive: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal. We have observed children who are gifted in all areas and find that all combinations are possible; however, very few children are gifted in more than five of the seven. Some are gifted in three to five, with most being gifted in one or two areas.

Now I'd like to share the stories of some of my most significant teachers — children I've encountered through these programs who have sometimes shown me what I did not know before and sometimes catalyzed my learning in escorting me from the two-dimensions of theory into the three-dimensions of real life. In their own ways, each child has animated for me many of the traits we associate with the gifted.

Real stories of real children follow, though their names have been changed. And, in case it would be interesting to you to compare your appraisals of their gifts with my findings in identifying their particular areas of strength, you'll find a list at the end of this article.

Crystal

Crystal, now 5, has an incredibly strong sense of self. To me this is a strength, a trait to be emulated and admired. However, in most classrooms, Crystal would be considered a troublemaker because she refuses to conform to anyone's agenda except her own.

During the first week of the preschool program, when 4-year-old Crystal didn't want to listen to the story being read, her teacher asked if she would like to do something with me. We both

(Continued on next page)

Lessons Learned

Continued from page 8

gladly accepted the invitation, went to a distant corner of the room and began reading a book she'd chosen. But after a couple of pages, I realized that Crystal was gone. Only five minutes, I thought, and I'd lost her already! I looked in every nook and cranny of that classroom but couldn't find her until I noticed the door to the classroom, usually open, was closed. As I was walking towards it, it opened, and a grinning Crystal peeked in. "I disappeared!" she said. Minutes later I realized that the teacher was reading a book to the class about an animal that disappeared. Although not a participating member of the story circle, Crystal had heard and understood every word of what was read, then had let me know this in her own playful way.

Another significant learning experience with Crystal occurred during a group lesson on size relationships. The teacher had several balls of various sizes and was asking the children which were bigger or smaller or whether they were the same. Since Crystal was on the floor in my lap, seemingly not attending at all, I felt compelled to put on my "teacher hat" and check her understanding of the concept. I asked her which of the balls was the biggest, and after a quick glance, she indicated the correct one. A few seconds later, with a twinkle in her eye, she looked up at me from where she was now lying on the floor with her head in my lap, touched my long, dangling earrings and asked, "Which of these is the biggest?" I replied that they were both the same size. With a knowing look, she said, "No. If you look at them this way," pulling on one earring so my head went to that side, "this one looks the biggest. And if you look at them this way," pulling on the other earring, "this one looks the biggest." Seemingly inattentive, she had not only understood the concept being presented but had gone beyond the basic premise in her own learning style. Right then and there, I decided that whenever I was around Crystal, I'd replace that teacher hat with a learner beanie!

Lessons I've learned first-hand from Crystal: 1) Children don't have to sit quietly to attend and learn, 2) Children often know and understand more than we give them credit for, 3) Appreciating children's humor is essential to understanding them, 4) When children "play tricks" on us, we must be careful not to react defensively or arrogantly, 5) High-ability children need to make their own choices about what, when and how to learn; they will learn much more on their own than when forced to follow an adult agenda.

Leanderson

When I met Leanderson, age 7, at the beginning of 2nd grade, we made eye contact immediately. He smiled in his usual shy, quiet, warm way and was one of the first to ask me to sit with him at lunch. As our team discovered, Leanderson made similar personal contact with everyone who came to the class, and his problem solving and creativity when working in small groups of children surprised none of us.

Later in the same year, we were trying out a series of standardized

tests in an attempt to find out which, if any, would reveal the advanced abilities of the children we had already observed in Leanderson's classroom. To the children these tests were boring in comparison to the problem-solving activities we usually did, and they kept asking where the toys were. When I explained that we really needed their help to find out which test was the best, they were wonderfully cooperative and did their best to take tests not designed for children who lived in a remote area of a reservation, many of whom had only started to learn English in 1st grade.

After two days of fairly intense testing, Leanderson and a group

(Continued on next page)

Lessons Learned

Continued from page 9

of his friends took me into a corner of the room where there was a map of the United States and asked me every question they could think of. They pointed to a state and asked its name, the capitals of states, and they wanted me to tell them the names of rivers and mountains. They even pulled out a children's education magazine and asked me the questions at the end of an article! We all laughed and had a great time, knowing it was only fair for them to have an opportunity to "test" me.

Leanderson and his friends are fascinated with languages. Most of the people on our team are at least bilingual — some speak four languages — and the children have come to expect us to teach them new words in other languages. One day at lunch, after I reviewed the numbers up to 10 in Spanish and French, I asked them to teach me the numbers in Navajo. I did my best, especially with Leanderson's encouragement. Once, after I had a particularly difficult time pronouncing seven (*tsost'id*), Leanderson, aware of my discomfort, said encouragingly, " You really had good accent that time."

Recently, Leanderson, now 10, and his family visited me in Tucson. One day, he and I ran lots of errands, and everywhere we stopped Leanderson helped in some way. In his usual friendly, warm way he captured the hearts of the people behind the counters; they ask me still when I'll be back with my wonderful little friend. I think Leanderson sees everyone as a potential friend. What a healthy way to look at the world!

Real-life lessons from Leanderson: 1) Children see people, not Navajos, Anglos, Hispanics, or Asians, 2) Children are fascinated with the differences between languages and people and want to learn about them, 3) High-ability children are highly intuitive and responsive to the needs of others, 4) Children, particularly the gifted, have a strong sense of justice and fairness.

Carlos

Carlos, age 4, came into his preschool class knowing very little, if any, English. A year later, Spanish is still his dominant language, but he speaks and understands a lot of English. After the usual morning group exercises and introductions to the learning areas in the room (given in both English and Spanish), the teacher encouraged the children to choose their own learning experiences. Carlos went directly to the puzzle rack, took the top puzzle, dumped the pieces on the rug, systematically turned each one over to examine it, then began fitting the puzzle together. As I sat with several children, helping them with their puzzles, I watched in amazement as Carlos put together his first, replaced it in its original spot and took down another. Using the same systematic strategy, he worked every puzzle on the rack and was beginning a second round when snack time was announced. I glanced at my watch and realized he'd worked non-stop for 40 minutes. Later, the teacher told me she'd forgotten to take out the difficult puzzles put in the rack to challenge her class at the end of last year. That certainly hadn't stopped Carlos; he took longer to work some of them but seemed to love the challenge.

A few days later, Carlos' major project was building. In the block center, he started a structure that eventually covered about 75 square feet. It was three-dimensional, incredibly complex, including both symmetrical and asymmetrical, visually-appealing units and negative space. All parts of the construction were connected, and many were well-balanced on very narrow bases. Every act was purposeful, and he seemed to know exactly what piece he needed and precisely where it should go. He moved around the structure with confidence, never bumping or touching the finely balanced pieces. That time I noted that he spent an hour and a half focusing intently on his task.

These were not isolated incidents. Carlos and many other children in the class focused for long periods of time. In the 13 months I've known him, I don't think Carlos has spent less than 20 minutes on any activity he's chosen — except eating.

From Carlos I've learned: 1) Children, especially the gifted, will spend long periods of time concentrating and focusing on activities of their own choice, 2) The generalizations made by educators and psychologists about young children's short attention

(Continued on next page)

Lessons Learned

Continued from page 10

spans apply to adult-selected activities rather than activities the children choose themselves, 3) Many young children are capable of sophisticated eye-hand coordination and careful movement when they're involved in a project, 4) Children's spatial and logical-mathematical abilities can be observed readily if we attend to their problem-solving processes and observe the evolution of the constructions they produce, 5) When given opportunities to choose their own learning experiences, most young children, gifted or not, will select activities difficult enough to challenge their abilities.

Darla

I observed a group of 10th graders as they solved progressively more difficult tangram puzzles, an activity we include in the DISCOVER problem-solving assessment. All students were fluent in speaking, reading and writing in both English and Navajo, and all were perfectionists and highly capable logical-mathematical problem solvers.

Their first problem was to make a rhombus with as many tangrams as possible. Each student had a bag with 21 pieces (three of the usual seven-piece sets). From the beginning, I could tell that Darla and the other students would settle for no less than 21-piece rhombuses — the most difficult challenge they could set for themselves. Darla studied the pieces and then began moving them purposefully. In three or four minutes she had a perfect rhombus made with all 21 pieces. "You have to look at them in groups," she said quietly and

proceeded to accept, and complete, another challenge when I suggested making a triangle with as many pieces as possible.

Next, we gave the students booklets containing puzzles that could be solved using their tangrams. Some of the puzzles have only one solution, while others can be solved in several ways, and are arranged in an order that is progressively more difficult. Very few people can solve all of these in the 40 minutes we spend on this activity.

Each page of the puzzle booklet contains several shapes, with some having as many as six. Most people (adults and children alike) complete one of the shapes and then move on to the next one. By the time they get to the last shape, most find themselves missing some necessary piece. They then go back, rearranging and substituting available pieces on other shapes, until they have the combinations that will enable them to complete the page. Sometimes they have to "clear the board" and start all over with a new perspective. Not Darla. Instead of constructing the shapes one at a time, she worked the entire page. She first studied all the shapes and compared them with all the pieces, then put each tangram in a certain place. I was truly amazed! Once the tangrams were placed, she never rearranged or substituted a single one. She did this on every page and completed the booklet in record time.

The students then moved on to a group problem-solving activity, also involving tangrams. They were instructed to combine their tangram sets and work together to make a triangle with as many pieces as possible. With very few words spoken, they worked together easily and efficiently and again set themselves a lofty goal.

During this activity, the students tried several strategies. They weren't satisfied with anything but a perfect triangle made with all four 21-piece sets and even took apart an 84-piece triangle because the top tangram was not exactly even with the others on both sides. At one point, we heard one of the group note that having tried Darla's ideas, they should then try everyone else's strategies. Throughout, their perfectionism was clearly evident, and they were unwilling to stop until they'd reached their goal.

Lessons learned from observing Darla and the other group members: 1) One who can visualize a whole picture and how the parts fit into it possesses a valuable and sophisticated ability, useful in many fields, but too seldom recognized and nurtured as an area of giftedness, 2) Some students establish very high goals for themselves and are not satisfied until they reach them, 3) Leadership and group processes can be observed by attending to non-verbal interactions as well as verbal ones; attending to speech as an indicator of leadership and personal skills provides only part of the picture.

(Continued on next page)

Lessons Learned

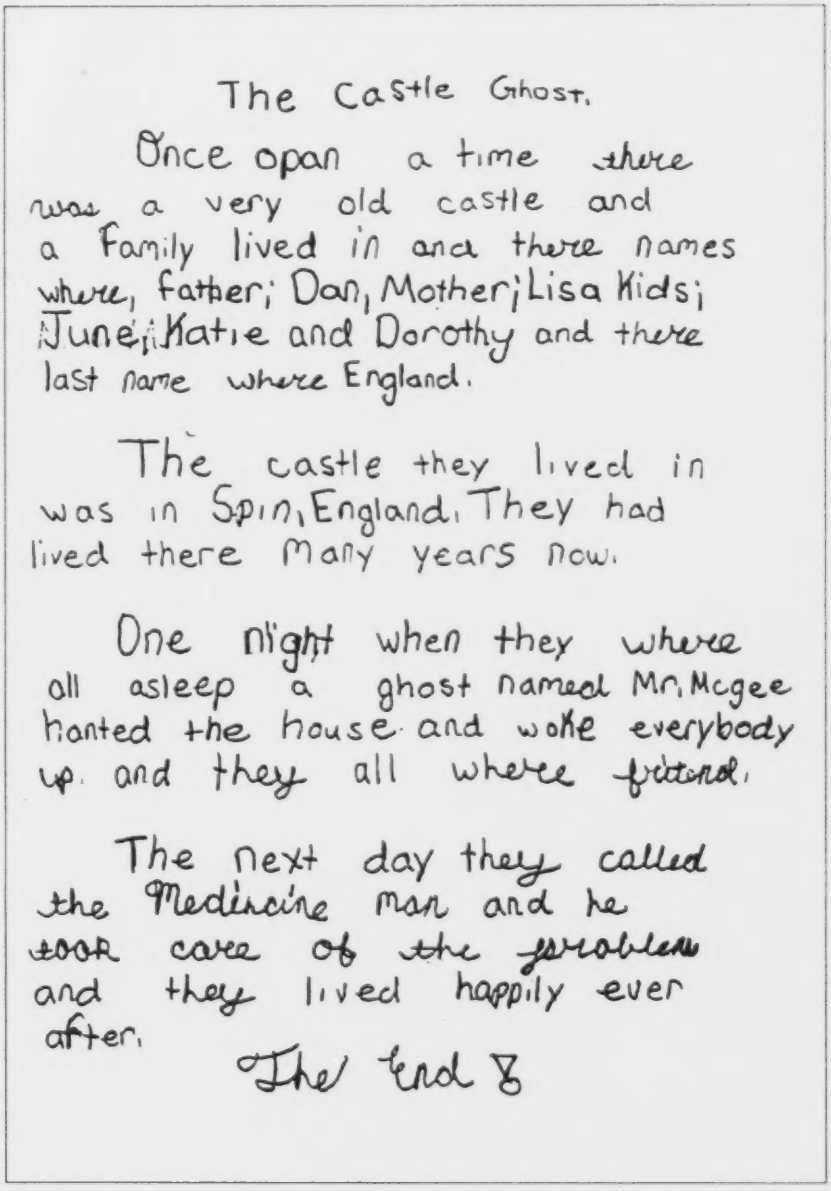
Continued from page 11

Melissa

One of the activities included in the DISCOVER assessment is an open-ended writing task. Often, it is done after the team of observers has worked with children for about a half-day. In the writing task, they are asked to write about anything, in any form. They may tell about a real experience, compose a poem, make up a story or tell about themselves. We stress the importance of what they say, and tell them that spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of writing are not graded. Because of the open-endedness of the activity, we learn a lot about linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

Melissa, who had lived most of her life on the Navajo reservation, was observed in her 4th-grade classroom by Dan, Katie, Dorothy and me, and we all appeared in her story (Figure 1).

Melissa and the other students do not draw the clear lines between cultures as some adults tend to do. What a valuable asset to be so flexible in thinking! Children are fascinated by languages, and by the different words that can be used to say the same thing. They don't condemn or look down on someone who doesn't speak their language. My observations convince me that they're eager to share their own experiences and their own cultures and that they seem to see different customs as interchangeable and of equal worth. They value being real and being themselves.



The Castle Ghost.

Once opan a time there was a very old castle and a family lived in and there names where, father; Dan, Mother; Lisa Kids; June; Katie and Dorothy and there last name where England.

The castle they lived in was in Spin, England. They had lived there many years now.

One night when they where all asleep a ghost named Mr. Mcgee hanted the house and woke everybody up. and they all where frited.

The next day they called the Medicine man and he took care of the problem and they lived happily ever after.

The End

Figure 1

(Continued on next page)

Lessons Learned

Continued from page 12

They borrow the best from all they know and integrate it in their own special way. ....***And that's the most important lesson I've learned from the children.***

*

***Crystal** is gifted in linguistic, logical-mathematical and intrapersonal intelligences.*
***Carlos** is gifted in logical-mathematical and spatial intelligences.*
***Leanderson** is gifted in interpersonal intelligence (as well as spatial and logical-mathematical intelligences, although no examples were given).*
***Darla** is gifted in logical-mathematical and spatial intelligences.*

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*Original drawings of the children in this article were created by artist **Darrell Anderson,** whose mosaic tile art at the new Denver International Airport represents various cultural and ethnic travelers.*

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 4

Selection Process
Student selection was based on the multi-criteria assessment procedures outlined in the American Indian Gifted and Talented Assessment Model (AIGTAM) which includes: leadership, grade point averages, IQ scores, standardized test scores, creativity, critical thinking and an essay by each student. In addition, a unique aspect of AIRD's approach to assessment was the inclusion of a Tribal-Cultural Understanding Checklist called the Indian Student Biographical Data Questionnaire.

Once Project EAGLE received completed questionnaires from potential EAGLE participants, a selection committee was chosen from various tribes and from diverse areas and fields. The committee reviewed the questionnaires and selected students and their parents who appeared most qualified to participate.

Before engaging in the leadership activities, participants were administered the EAGLE Leadership Skills Self Assessment (ELSSA) in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the participants. Having completed the program, participants again took the ELSSA as a post assessment.

The ELSSA consists of six sections containing 10 statements each. Participants rated themselves from the highest score of 5 to the lowest score of 1 according to how they felt about themselves in relation to each attribute mentioned. For each category there is a possible total score of 300 points. After two trainings and a community project, the EAGLE participant average score (of 132 participants) rose 15 points overall. The individual category increases in the six sections were as follows: Leadership Theory +5.0; Problem Solving +3.8; Decision Making +2.9; Communication Skills +2.6; Conflict Management +1.5; Social Dynamics +1.2.

***Note:** For specific information on selection and assessment instruments contact:* American Indian *Research & Development, Inc.; 2424 Spring Drive, Suite # 200; Norman, OK 73069.*

Leadership
Project EAGLE built on leader strengths of individuals and promoted understanding of key leadership concepts through simple, culturally appropriate activities which, through participation, allowed experiential learning to take place in a safe, value-free environment. Included were techniques that created group cohesion, activity processing and self disclosure to promote better communication; and commitment, cooperation in general, trust, self awareness, positive self concept, creativity and insights into effective leadership.

Parents and Students
The parent and child interaction has been the most gratifying outcome of Project EAGLE. Prior to the project, a survey by the Oklahoma Student White House Conference Committee revealed that gifted high school Indian students considered "lack

(Continued on next page)

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 13

of parental involvement in schools" to be the number one problem for Indian students. Parents responded by saying that they did not have positive associations with schools they had attended and therefore had a difficult time returning to them to support school activities. Still, they added that they wanted their children to excel in school.

Project EAGLE created a learning environment in which students and parents could triumph together. EAGLE group leaders explained their facilitative roles to help group members express their gifts more freely and to support their empowerment in taking responsibility for their actions and learning. It was emphasized that mutual participant sharing of experiences, courageous risk-taking and interpersonal validation among members tend to have the most beneficial impact upon learning and positive group experience (Dies, 1993). It was clearly stated that participants would be expected to learn from their shared experiences and would be asked to reflect upon their interactions. Participation and ownership of group activities was encouraged and expected. In culturally relevant leadership activities students and parents played and worked together to attain high goals, overcame obstacles, met challenges, dealt with conflicts and made decisions.

Providing a safe environment was crucial for genuine interaction. Participants were encouraged to speak early on in the session by introducing themselves and relating short biographies. For those not comfortable speaking before a group, playfulness has proven to be key in breaking down barriers to self-expression.

The first session began with an EAGLE Indian naming ceremony. Each person gave himself a new name to be used in every Eagle activity. The EAGLE name was to identify something in nature and to reflect some quality or attribute that one wanted to emulate or express more easily. To be summoned with the EAGLE name was to be viewed as support for actualizing the quality or attribute. With the naming ceremony a new identity was established, giving each person an opportunity to take risks in assuming his or her self-aspiring identity. Old labels received at home and school were cast aside for the duration of the sessions, allowing one to step out of perceived roles and assume a new identity. In one instance, an exceptionally shy Sioux boy of immense size changed his name to "Native American Nightmare" to become "someone to be reckoned with."

Some parents claimed they had had little intimate interaction with their children since the grade school years. Consequently, quantum leaps of growth occurred in relationships of some parents and their children.

A father and son were having difficulty communicating with each other, and the 10th-grade Pottowatomie boy was initially reluctant to take part in the program. When the students and parents were separated during an EAGLE training session, the father expressed frustration with his son. He said that he loved his son, but the boy was "so odd." The father was concerned about his son being so absorbed in "unusual subjects," such as science fiction, computers and science projects. Why couldn't he play sports like his brother? The father commented, "I sure wish he were more normal. We do hardly any talking now." Other parents made him aware that their children had interests similar to his son's and that they were supporting them in these interests.

During the next activity, "Strained Relations," which required partners to pull each other across a line while tugging on a fragile string, this same father and son repeatedly snapped the string, both too stubborn to cross the line and thus bring themselves together. The discussion that followed involved encouraging the two, as well as others in the group, to engage in genuine dialogue about parent and child connections. By the end of the day the mind sets of the two were definitely effected; they began planning community projects together, eventually doing carpentry work together to help an elderly person add a room to her house.

By the last EAGLE gathering, the relationship between father and son had changed dramatically. The man led all the EAGLE students in a round dance, his son holding his hand. During the "Giveaway," the boy told of how his father loved the land and then gave him a make-believe land

(Continued on next page)

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 14

deed to the state of Montana. The father, choked with tears, pulled out a Pottawatomie "Talking Feather" he had secretly made for his son. He told his son that he had not listened to him enough, but from then on whenever his son held up the feather he would listen, no matter what.

Silence/Wait-Time

The role of silence was a very important part of the processing. A Cherokee proverb says, "Listen or your tongue will make you deaf" (Hisler, 1992). Silence allowed EAGLE participants to reflect and make their most thoughtful and heartfelt remarks. Initially, some of the group leaders felt uncomfortable with the silence and would quickly rephrase or answer their own questions, limiting participants' in-depth discussion. Processing improved as group leaders became better at practicing silence following each question and response. This practiced silence promoted respectful and empathetic rapport with participants, allowing time to express feelings and ideas after thought and reflection. Luther Standing Bear's description of traditional conversation was a good guide:

> *Conversation was never begun at once, nor in a hurried manner. No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation... a space of silence before talking was done in regard to the rule that thought comes before speech* (Hisler, 1992).

In America's public schools today, there is a premium placed on the quickness of a correct response, rather than upon the silence and deliberate thought practiced by many traditional American Indians. Several studies have reported that extended wait-time during processing in classrooms has improved student discipline (Rowe, 1986) and topic-related questioning from students (Samiroden, 1983). While it is difficult to determine a cause and effect relation between extended wait-time and the aforementioned outcomes, experiences in Project EAGLE indicate that using silence via extended wait-time have contributed to greater participant learning and increased emotional and cognitive expressiveness. The use of silence/wait-time taps into highly revered traditional American Indian forms of communication still adhered to in tribal religious ceremonies and in everyday communications. This is not to imply that all Indian/tribal people use silence/wait-time, but that many do.

Immediate Impact

The most immediate impact the EAGLE training had upon participants is best represented by a sampling of anecdotes drawn from incidents that occurred during the training sessions and community projects.

Communication: During "Accept the Honor", Ayè, a young woman from a boarding school, laughingly rejected all compliments offered her by the circle of participants, as she was supposed to. And everyone laughed. Then, on the second round, when she was to warmly receive the compliments, she broke down midway through when a teacher from a nearby school told her that she admired her for the discipline it took for her to be a great long distance runner. The young woman explained that no one had ever told her that before, and she did not know what to say. The discussion eventually brought out that at some boarding schools the "razing" was very rough and that if anyone ever complimented you, you should expect that you were being set up for ridicule. Nonetheless, she received this compliment with honor and appreciation as did the others. Participants also worked at offering kind remarks.

Conflict Management: A father related that he and his son had not been able to get along. During the "Strained Relations" activity, when they were the only partners who had not resolved the dilemma, the father abruptly told his son that he was to be obeyed without question. After repressing his resentment for a few seconds, the boy asked, "Why haven't you let me tour Europe the past two summers with the all-star band?" The father became visibly emotional and sadly expressed regret at his inability to afford it. The boy was moved, crossed the line and told his father that he understood and then looked at the rest of the group saying, "I do not always show my father the respect he deserves." During processing, the father related his struggle with his own

(Continued on next page)

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 15

father over his conversion to Christianity and his rejection of tribal customs. He now did not see the differences as being so great and wondered aloud how much he was repeating his own conflicts. Two months later at the Eagle banquet, the father proudly told participants that his son had a full music scholarship to the University of Arkansas. The young man played a number for the gathering.

Decision Making: In "Survival Strategies," participants were given catalogues and told they had 20 minutes to decide what they wished to buy before a helicopter would arrive to take their small group to an isolated area where they would stay for two years. During the discussion about how they would prepare before leaving, a parent participant seriously interjected, "If this were real, could I trust you guys? Today's young people appear selfish to me." This sobering remark suddenly caused participants to look at their inner selves, instead of their physical needs and goals for the activity. They began talking about their personal characters and the aspirations and responsibilities they felt for their tribe and society. These ideas were mixed with realistic options. They realized that decision making is an integral part of our belief and value system.

Leadership Theory: Without exception, during the "Create a Leader" activity, participants initially defined leadership negatively. Examples are: "Good Indian leadership is not being corrupt." and "Indian leaders should not hire people just because they know them as friends." By the end of the processing, participants proposed positive qualities, such as: spirituality, competency, dignity, respectability, intelligence and good communication skills.

Problem Solving: During "Tipi Productions" participants not only linearly figured things out, they came to see problems from a global perspective and considered the larger effects of their actions. Small groups with proper material, but without any directions, were first challenged to make as many tipi models as possible in one minute. The lack of opportunity to plan resulted in less than adequate production. When participants were given an opportunity to plan, they did better and were able to articulate the reasons for the difference. Then, just before making tipis again, certain workers went on strike, or groups were informed that certain tools used to make tipis had not been taken care of and were therefore inoperative. Participants had to make adjustments in seconds before beginning again. Lastly, the groups were to make one colorful tipi in a five-minute period. During processing they discussed problem solving not just in terms of mechanics, but in terms of group interaction, management, delegation of responsibilities, organization, feelings of inadequacy, communication skills and relation to the meaningfulness of work and work situations. In regard to the last point, one student said, "The first few tipis are like we're making them for tourists who don't really appreciate tipis, but the last one is for us."

Social Dynamics: Often gifted students are labeled as being weak in areas of casual interaction, often over-utilizing cognitive functioning. During "silly" activities, such as "Nice to Meet You But I Gotta Blaze" and "Shame Out," participants found themselves "loosening up," in spite of themselves. One of the points of the games was to tease each other until persons laughed at themselves. Many EAGLE participants claimed that they never laughed so much as during the sessions.

Over the three years of the project, EAGLE activities have been refined, and external evaluations indicate that it did meet the intended goal of enhancing leadership potential of gifted American Indian children and their parental partners. Leadership attributes of communications, decision making and planning skills were measurably enhanced. The greatest advancement came in the area of social interactional skills. Many students and their parents evidenced a heightened growth in their awareness of successfully interacting with others, especially with each other. Trust, open verbal expressions, humor and honesty were social interaction skills that opened or reopened communications between parents and students. Such interaction led to many reunions of spirit, resulting in new bonds of friendship and understanding based on respect. This externality was a most satisfying by-product of Project EAGLE, one that isn't measurable but is truly of value for parents and children in today's society.

(Continued on page 18)

Creative Ventures

Beautiful Books

On this journey we travel to the American Southwest, specifically to Flagstaff, Arizona, the home of a remarkably creative, child-centered company, Northland Publishing. With the appearance of each new volume, I am increasingly impressed. However, since they remain a relatively small publisher, many parents and teachers may be unaware of their superb books for young readers.

All of Northland's children's books are feasts for the senses. The illustrations by premier artists, many of whom are Native Americans, are eye-popping. For example, Michael Lacapa's sumptuous paintings for *Less than Half, More than Whole* (Kathleen and Michael Lacapa, 1994) capture a strong sense of family while presenting bold, colorful Apache, Hopi, Mohawk and other Native American designs. Skillfully reproduced, all Northland art is beautiful, but the books themselves are as much a joy to hold as they are to view. Even the paper texture is special: the pages are tactually inviting, smooth and cool to the touch.

Tools for Teachers is a Northland bonanza for busy parents and teachers. This is a series of teaching guides designed to accompany many of their children's titles, and young readers will love the offerings of hands-on learning activities and extensions that integrate art, science, mathematics, geography, creative writing and cultural heritage. Chiefly created by former Oregon Teacher of the Year, Lynda Hatch, *Tools for Teachers* is free and may be photocopied for nonprofit, educational use.

Most well known of Northland's children's titles is Susan Lowell's *The Three Little Javelinas* (1992), a delightful retelling of "The Three Little Pigs." Lowell sets her version in the Sonoran Desert, with her characters three javelinas, Southwestern cousins of pigs, and a hungry, cunning coyote instead of the wolf. The first two javelinas construct dwellings from tumbleweed and saguaro cacti ribs, while their wiser sister uses adobe bricks to build a secure home. Setting and characters are gloriously realized by Jim Harris' vibrant and humorous paintings. A sure crowd-pleaser with readers of every age, Northland has made sure that the whole family can enjoy this tale even on a long car excursion: the story has been reproduced with music and sound effects on audio tape, and a small stuffed-animal javelina is also available.

The *Tools for Teachers* guide for *The Three Little Javelinas* is filled with experiments and activities for home or school. A paper-folding exercise demonstrates how a saguaro cactus stores moisture and survives in the harsh, dry desert environment; kids are also encouraged to learn about the many cultural groups living in the Southwest and to experiment with recipes using prickly pear cacti. Fans of *The Three Little Javelinas* no doubt will also enjoy *The Tortoise and the Jackrabbit* (1992) by the same dynamic author-illustrator duo and find this story included on the same audio tape.

Another innovative Northland picture book is *Carlos and the Squash Plant* by Jan Romero Stevens (1993). Stevens' delightful tale of a young boy who lives on a small farm in northern New Mexico features bright, cheerful illustrations by Jeanne Arnold and bilingual (English and Spanish) text. This charming tale shows

(Continued on next page)

Beautiful Books

Continued from page 17

what happens to a boy who ignores his mother's warning to wash the dirt from his ears: overnight, a healthy, verdant squash plant grows out of Carlos' ear! The book ends with the recipe for Carlos' favorite food, *calabacitas*, a spicy dish made of squash, cheese, corn, and green chilies, which children and their parents can cook up in their own kitchens.

The teaching guide for *Carlos and the Squash Plant* offers a delectable experiment for young children which highlights the importance of using soap and water to get rid of germs. Children spray cooking oil on their hands and then sprinkle them with cinnamon to represent germs, which no amount of wiping or rubbing will wash away. Only a good workout with soap and water will yield clean hands! Stevens and Arnold collaborated to produce a sequel, *Carlos and the Cornfield* (1995), in which the young hero learns important lessons about honesty and honor in one's family.

A personal favorite is the newly published *The Same Sun Was in the Same Sky* (1994) authored by Denise Webb and illustrated by Walter Porter. This is a wonderful story of the remote past, the present and the faraway future. A young boy and his grandfather in present-day Arizona discover petroglyphs created by Hohokam people hundreds, if not thousands, of years past. In his mind's eye, the boy begins to see another boy, a Hohokam youth under the same sun and the same sky in ages past. The boy imagines the Hohokam youth gathering food, hunting and creating pictures on the ancient rocks. The boy realizes that just as he is imagining the life of a long-ago youth, hundreds of years hence, another visitor, perhaps traveling in a space vehicle, will walk under the same sky and the same sun and wonder about him. The teaching guide for this beautifully produced book describes how children can make their own crayon petroglyphs as well as contemplate future innovations in clothing, food gathering, housing and transportation based upon their extrapolations from past and present inventions.

Not limited to creative children's picture books, this trailblazing company also produces art, natural history and travel books for adults. For a catalog, contact Northland Publishing, P. O. Box 1389, Flagstaff, Arizona 86002; 1-800-346-3257.

Jerry Flack is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Project EAGLE

Continued from page 16

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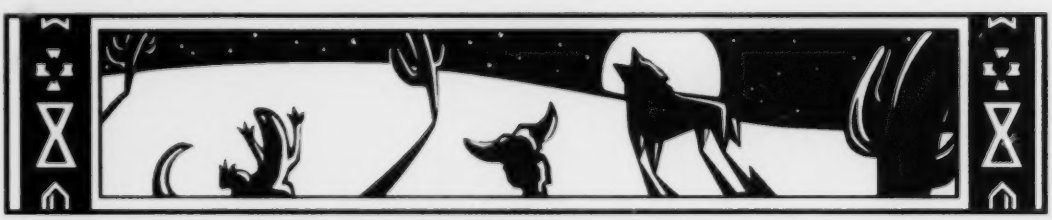

Above and Beyond

Multicultural "Miracles"

As the coordinator of a gifted program, it was my job to identify those 6th-grade students who were eligible to take the SAT for the National Academic Talent Search. Only those students who scored at or above the 95th percentile in reading and/or math were eligible. Imagine my surprise when 80% of the eligible students had not been born in the United States! Imagine my embarrassment when I discovered that the same 80% had never been in our district's gifted program, even though several of those students had attended our school since the primary grades! Imagine my astonishment when most of those same students scored high enough on the SAT to become eligible for extended educational opportunities!

How could this have happened? As I checked back through the record of their standardized test results, I noticed a disturbing pattern. All of these students had very *average* test scores throughout the grades, until they took the test as 5th and 6th graders, at which point they "miraculously" became gifted! The reasons for this phenomenon are elusive. Perhaps their internalized understanding of English did not mature until they were older. Perhaps their "Americanized" experiences were too limited for them to be comfortable with the test items. Perhaps they had experienced "test anxiety" or were unaware of how to take standardized tests or of their importance in program placement. Whatever the reasons, this experience led me to create the following guidelines to use when considering the eligibility of students of multicultural backgrounds for gifted education services:

1. Never use standardized test scores as the single criteria for screening and placement.
2. Support the use of a multiple intelligence model (Lazear, 1991) to identify more students than those who demonstrate their exceptional ability in language or mathematical modes.
3. Talk to parents and teachers for evidence that exceptional learning ability is present.
4. Investigate the use of the Ravens Progressive Matrices and other tests that are fair to various cultures in the identification process. See Chapter 12 in Kitano and Kirby (1968) for specific references.
5. Investigate existing programs that have addressed the issue of including students who are culturally diverse. Contact Project START in Charlotte, North Carolina (704/343-5400).
6. Above all, be flexible in defining "giftedness" so you can appreciate that students from other cultures may express their exceptional ability in non-traditional ways.

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Ravens Progressive Matrices are distributed by The Psychological Corp, San Antonio, TX. 1-800-228-0752.

Susan Winebrenner, from Illinois, presents workshops on a variety of topics, but her first love is teaching gifted children. She is the author of ***Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.***

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The Bulletin Board

This space is for you!

This section serves parents, teachers and non-profit groups. We will print your announcements as space permits.

FALL CONFERENCES

October 19, 20, 21, **Autonomous University of Tlaxcala**, Mexico. "Second Multicultural Meeting of Special Education." Topics include: Learning Disabilities, Education of the Gifted, Family Orientation. Janet Saenz, Tel/FAX 011(525)8136937.

November 8-12, **National Association for Gifted Children,** 42nd Annual Convention, Tampa, FL. Peter Rosenstein, (202)785-4268.

PING....a Live-Response Hotline for Parents of Gifted Children. 1-900-773-PING. Sponsored by the Gifted Child Society, Inc.

HOLD THIS DATE—FEBRUARY 23, 1996
Beyond Giftedness III, Arvada, Colorado, presented by ***Open Space Communications.***

COMING ATTRACTIONS

The March/April, 1996 issue of ***Understanding Our Gifted*** will focus on Parenting the Gifted: advice, school and curriculum alternatives, home resources, challenge...and more. We will also launch a new feature, a forum for discussion of what is important in the lives of gifted children and those who live and work with them. Share your views and opinions, your successes and frustrations, your expertise and your dreams. We'll publish them in *your* new column!

Please include your name and address; if your correspondence is published we will mention your name and state or country, unless you specify otherwise. Address your letter, e-mail or FAX to: Open Space Communications, Inc. FAX (303) 545-6505/e-mail 71552.1425@compuserv.com

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Gifted Students in Upper Elementary/Middle School

Guest Editor
F. Richard Olenchak

Carol Fertig

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Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

November/December, 1995

Volume 8, Issue 2

Middle School Principals: Advocacy for Development of Gifts and Talents

F. Richard Olenchak

An 8th grader, Allison has enjoyed participating in a wide variety of thematic classes during the three years of her enrollment in a rural middle school. Most recently, she has developed an interest in speleology as a result of activities offered through one of her school's mini courses and is writing a guidebook to the numerous caves located in the vicinity. Under the supervision of two teachers and the assistance of the spelunker who assisted with the mini course, Allison has already received an offer to have her manuscript published.

Damon, enrolled in 7th grade at a large urban middle school, decided to address the issue of youth violence that has overtaken the surrounding neighborhood. With the guidance of his school counselor and the four teachers from the "house," or school within the school in which Damon is enrolled, he has established an after-school activity program. Supervised by volunteers from the school, the downtown YMCA and the Boy's/Girl's Club, the program offers games and sports, rap

(Continued on page 8)

FOCUS ON:

Gifted Students in Upper Elementary/ Middle School

GUEST EDITOR

F. Richard Olenchak

INSIDE

Tactics
Nancy Frailey Puckett ... 3

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 5

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 6

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 7

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 17

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 19

Materials and Curriculum Ideas to Challenge Upper Elementary/Middle School Students

Carol Fertig

As I work with teachers in the regular classroom, both as a gifted and talented resource teacher and as a staff-developer and consultant, I find that most teachers see a real need for differentiating curriculum for high-ability learners but lack information and tools to actually accomplish this. These educators already have an awareness of characteristics of high-ability students, and they understand that these students have a right to learn at an appropriate pace and to the depth of their abilities on a daily basis. Teachers sincerely want to be able to facilitate the best possible learning situations for *all* their students. The reality of today's educational climate, however, makes it very difficult for teachers to find the time to research, learn and practice appropriate strategies and to locate materials that empower them to significantly differentiate curriculum. Even after working with teachers to demonstrate strategies such as compacting and tiered assignments, I find they have a real need to know about specific materials available to make these strategies more viable.

(Continued on page 13)

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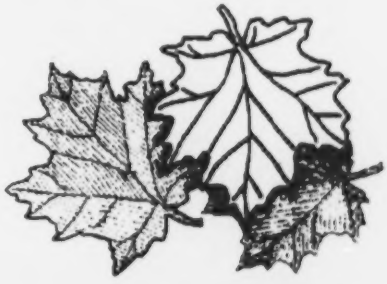
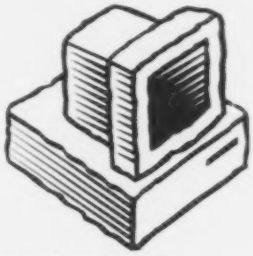


Understanding Our Gifted **(ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Open Space Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268. Subscriptions are $35 for 1 year (6 issues). Institutions $40. International subscriptions are $47 U.S. funds; International institutions $55. Back issues $8; International $10. Third class postage paid at Boulder, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *Understanding Our Gifted*, 1900 Folsom, Suite 108, Boulder, CO 80302, eight weeks before moving.** **Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright 1995, Open Space Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. (303)444-7020/FAX (303)545-6505, 1-800-494-6178.**

Between the Lines

In many communities elementary school used to mean kindergarten through 8th grade, and high school consisted of 9th through 12th grades. Many of us recall an education which included junior high—7th, 8th and 9th grades—where you metamorphosed from childhood to pre-adulthood, emerging prepared for the independence of high school.

In more recent times yet another educational solution came about for the challenging adolescent years: middle school—6th, 7th and 8th grades. The middle school concept has been debated, analyzed and researched, as parents, students and educators continue to be at odds regarding its positive impact on both self-esteem and academics.



Whatever your philosophy of education for late elementary and pre-high school students, we probably agree that this period is a critical and often difficult one in the lives of young people—particularly the gifted. In recent issues of *Understanding Our Gifted*, we have focused on young gifted children and secondary gifted youth. Now we emphasize upper elementary and middle school years, with Guest Editor Rick Olenchak discussing the special role of middle school principals as active advocates in nurturing gifts and talents during these transition years; Carol Fertig offering practical suggestions for materials and curriculum ideas from her own classroom experience with the gifted; and Tactics columnist Nancy Puckett sharing the hands-on, product/project approach she finds most effective with her gifted junior high students.

Our communication technology is increasing: You can reach us via phone, mail, FAX and e-mail ***(See P. 20).*** Continue to share your thoughts about education for the gifted.

D.K.

Tactics

The Junior High Experience
Teaching Gifted/Talented 7th, 8th, 9th Grade Students

Nancy Frailey Puckett

Two years ago I made the move from working with gifted and talented elementary students to teaching in a junior high school program, and since then my days have never been boring, my nights have been busy and my whole outlook on this creature called "a junior high student" has changed.

Many school districts offer accelerated classes for the junior high school gifted and talented child. After much reading, research and analysis of test scores, I decided that the language arts program for these students needed to be literature- and vocabulary-based. However, it also needed an exploratory component that would allow students to investigate and explore areas of interest within the language arts framework.

I believe curriculum should be flexible enough to allow for students to experience many methods of teaching and learning. For example, when we were reading *Of Mice and Men*, some of my students genuinely disliked Steinbeck's writing style. Consequently, I challenged these students to choose a couple of chapters they particularly disliked and rewrite them. Three boys in the class could not get interested in the book until we reached the bunkhouse chapter. They had never been to a bunkhouse but wanted to create one out of a cardboard box. One side was done as an exact Steinbeck replica, while the other side reflected a modern-day version of a bunkhouse. Their project involved research, reading, vocabulary development, oral language development and creativity, and they were required to share with the class their finished product and what they'd learned.

I've found that by allowing students to choose from presented alternatives, they are more likely to take ownership in their indi-

(Continued on page 4)

Tactics

Continued from page 3

vidual learning processes and to learn in a much more in-depth and creative manner.

In our language arts class, students produce few book reports per se. But when we do work on a book report, students have the option of presenting orally in a format of their individual choice. Recently, one student appeared in class dressed as Miss Marple and gave her report from that character's perspective. Another chose to re-enact the court case from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, comparing and contrasting Harper Lee's fictional trial with the real-life one of O. J. Simpson. Students in this class compete with each other to try and outwit the others in their search for creative ideas. All presentations are videotaped so that as the year progresses we can look back and see how much each student has grown, both academically and physically.

I also teach a resource class for gifted 7th-, 8th- and 9th-graders. This one has become great fun for me since I began encouraging students to become active participants in their own learning.

For alternative assessments, I use portfolios. Mine are somewhat unorthodox: the giant, old-fashioned scrapbooks with huge blank pages. Into these go samples of the students' best writing; both their choices and mine are considered. We also include pictures taken during classroom presentations.

During one recent unit of study, the class was investigating media and the different ways persuasive writing is used. Each student chose a concept (some worked in pairs) and was to prepare a persuasive public speech, three minutes in length; design a billboard; create and tape a radio commercial, complete with sound effects; and produce and film a TV ad. Their portfolios ultimately contained many pictures, drawings and written works generated during this one exploratory unit.

Writing is usually a component of any assignment the students undertake. I model writing in the classroom, and the students join me in taking a moment every day to jot down thoughts, concerns and even essays in our journals. My students score very high on both the "Florida Writes" and national writing tests. I believe one of the major reasons for these scores is the fact that writing is neither a chore nor an extracurricular activity. It is an integral part of their everyday lives.

Gifted junior high students may appear to be uninterested in the world around them, concerned instead with being "cool" — always! But I have found that these young people are very interested in world and adult issues.

Last year's students were especially interested in the O. J. Simpson trial. At that time the class was field-testing a problem-solving model I'd designed. Copyrighted as "Problem Solving with Mother Goose," this model has students read several versions of classic fairy tales and nursery rhymes, identify the problems they present, brainstorm for appropriate criteria and use a Likert scale to select the best solutions. When we read "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" the students, upon completing the problem-solving activity, decided that the bears hadn't gotten a "fair deal." Moreover, they decided to try the case of The Three Bears v. Goldilocks, in which the bears were suing Goldilocks for breaking and entering as well as for destruction of property. To prepare their case the class worked with members of the Florida Bar Association as mentors, advising them on the roles of the judge, jury and witnesses and illustrating prosecution and defense techniques.

As with many gifted and talented children, the hands-on, project/product-oriented approach seems to work most effectively. There are always times when students must learn skills, develop vocabulary and do plain old-fashioned school work. But by justifying and explaining to them the need for such work, I manage to get cooperative, enthusiastic youngsters to feel that no problem is too great nor any task too monumental.

Nancy Frailey Puckett teaches gifted education language arts, media/film making and resource grades 7, 8, 9 in Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida.

ParentSpace

Early Passage

What's been gnawing at me lately ties in directly with this issue's focus on upper elementary and middle school. It is the seemingly sudden shift in size and interest differentials between kids who have been grade-level accelerated and their older classmates. Till now, pint-sized primary students and their somewhat bigger intermediate counterparts all seemed pretty much like little kids, regardless of age-grade configuration. But it doesn't seem like that anymore, and, to my relief, recent conversations and my mail indicate that I'm not the only parent with these perceptions and experiencing this nervousness.

Moving precocious, unchallenged and dissatisfied little ones a grade level (or two) ahead often makes a lot of "intellectual" sense for them. Sometimes it happens as one element in an array of interventions, and sometimes it's the only option a school can offer. But whatever the situation and nature of the child, along with academic concerns always come the social questions: is my child mature enough for this, will he fit in, be accepted, have friends; will she be happy? In the literature I've read and from the many parents I've spoken with, the indicators are that acceleration is, indeed, a good and beneficial thing.

So why are we parents of children in the 9- and 10-year-old range suddenly so uneasy? Well, because all at once things look and feel different.

For me it started before Labor Day at the back-to-school class picnic. A veteran of acceleration, my son at 9, is a member of a 5th/6th-grade class this year. At his picnic that day, after one short summer away, I was startled to see the changes in his classmates. The now-5th-grade boys were taller and bulkier, the girls longer and rounder, but the real shock was in the decidedly pre-teen appearance and demeanor of the 6th graders. I wasn't prepared for this. And that's what I hear in similar words and tones of voice from other parents, that the differences are sudden, startling and, yes, frightening. We've grown accustomed to our children being the smallest and a year or two younger than their classmates, and they're used to it too. But what impact does it have on them when those same classmates are making their pre-adolescent developmental leaps, leaving behind (our) still-little kids?

One mom told me that her daughter Louisa, barely 10, is at the top of her class of 11, 12 and 13 year olds in a school for the gifted. She's soaring, the teachers report. "Intellectually, I know the work suits her and she's thriving," Louisa's mom said, "but on the inside I'm still a *wreck*." Another parent told of how her son Sam, 10 and in his first year of middle school, had been invited out on a date. "He still sleeps with a stuffed animal," this mom confided, "and plays Z-Bots with the neighborhood boys."

The concerns and fears of these and other parents match my own. What do we do with and for our younger children who arrive ahead of time into this new land of pre-teens? Where do we find the answers on this one? Well, after a fair amount of fretting, consulting and soul-searching, I've decided we should take our cues from the kids themselves.

After several days of elation over his invitation and a couple of hushed phone calls with the girl, Sam's date never happened. "He says he decided to wait and hasn't said much more about it," his mom told me. Sam knew. Louisa's mom reports that now that Louisa is with older students (this acceleration was recent), her daughter's friendships seem to have more depth and to be more satisfying. Out of the shaky inside part of herself, she told me with a little smile, she finds herself too often asking Louisa how it is being with kids so much older. Louisa tells her it's the best thing that ever happened to her. When asked how he feels about his classmates suddenly being so much bigger, my son said, "I got used to being the smallest a long time ago." It seems this may be a parental outside-looking-in issue. These children have been advanced for logical and necessary reasons: they *are* advanced and need to have appropriate curricula and to be among their intellectual peers. They often seem to have uncanny self-knowledge and to know just how to take care of themselves socially.

I believe the best we can do to help them in this is trust who and what they are and keep their asynchrony in mind (as if we *could* forget it). We must allow

(Continued on page 8)

Sandra Berger

Surfing the Net

Counseling Resources

It's time to hit the road yet again! This time, we'll visit sites that provide useful information for everyone concerned about the social and emotional well being of gifted children and adolescents.

The popularity of the World Wide Web (WWW) has increased significantly. It's hard to believe that the gopher client/server, a relatively young and effective tool, is being overshadowed, overwhelmed and, in some cases, absorbed into the newest and strongest Internet navigation tool yet—the World Wide Web; a move that is changing the face of some Internet sites. The State University of New York at Buffalo, the first site on our tour, posted an announcement indicating they are no longer maintaining the gopher server. If you use the "Host" address posted below, you may find that the information is old or incomplete. If you can, use the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). Absorption of gopher servers by web sites also means that if you are using a commercial Internet provider, make sure it is prepared to keep up with the changes.

SUNY at Buffalo (BU) offers a Counseling Center Self-Help Home Page with a wide selection of documents, Internet resources, referrals and a reading list, all related to helping students with day-to-day stresses and difficulties. To reach their gopher site, use the following address: Host: *wings.buffalo.edu* (gopher server) Select: —> Student Life and Services/ —> Counseling Center/ This path takes you to a menu that provides a vast array of choices related to stress and anxiety. Most menu choices are followed by *HMTL*. When you choose one of these selections, you will receive a warning that you are leaving the Internet gopher server and connecting to an HTML Browser. The message asks if you want to continue. If the answer is yes, you will be instantly transported through cyberspace to BU's Web site.

If you have WWW access, use the following URLs:
Linkname: COUNSELING CENTER - University at Buffalo
URL: *http:/wings.buffalo.edu:80/*
URL: *http://wings.buffalo.edu/student-life/ccenter/*
URL: *http://wings.buffalo.edu/student-life/ccenter/.psychres.html*
(The double "c" in "ccenter" is essential.)

Note the similarities in these addresses. They are all located at the SUNY Buffalo Counseling Center, and each address takes you beyond the previous one. The second address takes you to the Student Life Center, where you will find a link that leads to the third address—a page of Internet Resources for Mental Health Professionals. If you found any one of these addresses, you could find the other two by following backward or forward links. All addresses for gopher and web sites are constructed in the same manner. The longer the address, the more likely you will find specific information. When you want to find the "root" menu, simply use the server name (wings), the host name (buffalo), and the domain (edu).

The next stop on our tour is the counseling center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Their useful self-help brochures include "Overcoming Procrastination," "Perfectionism," "Time Management," "Test Anxiety" and "Stress Management." The first address is the Counseling Center Service, the second is the self-help brochures, and the third is the gopher server.

URL: *gopher://gopher.uiuc.edu/11/UI/CSF/Coun/*
Linkname: Self-Help Brochures
Filename: *gopher://gopher.uiuc.edu/11/UI/CSF/Coun/SHB*
Host: *gopher.uiuc.edu*

I found this site quite by accident as I was wandering through the menus at UI. One of the menu choices was "Keyword Search of UIUC Gopher Menus." I selected that item and typed the word "counseling." Eureka! The Counseling Center menu appeared. You can try this, too. Here's a hint. The University of Oregon home page URL is *http://www.uoregon.edu/*. See if you can find their counseling center and self-help brochures.

That ends our tour for now. See you on the road!

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

Sandra Berger is the Information Specialist for Gifted Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education in Reston, Virginia. She is the author of ***College Planning for Gifted Students.***

Gloria Frender

Learning To Learn

Parents as Home Consultants: *Part I*

The efficient mentality has
balance, perception,
organization, ability and stamina.
Anonymous

Even gifted students need parents! It's true that experience teaches, but young people, regardless of their intellectual gifts, still need guidance. Keep these strategies in mind as you continue your home support for learning.

Make learning a meaningful priority

1. Help your children understand that they are responsible for their learning. It does not *always* come easily, and learned perseverance is important in attaining goals and success.
2. Discuss realistic and acceptable goals. Brainstorm various processes by which to achieve them and tangible ways to measure completion if appropriate.
3. Discuss and model your commitment to education. Demonstrate your continual passion for learning, exploring, questioning, inventing. Be clear and consistent with your expectations and openly discuss your values concerning education and its impact on the future. Discuss your children's expectations and visions for the future; you might be surprised!
4. Underscore the importance of reading, writing, thinking and math skills in all areas of study. Discourage laziness and encourage mastery of these fundamental skills at appropriate levels of mental development. It's easy for gifted students to have tunnel vision and passion for a specific area, letting necessary skills in other areas lag behind.
5. Limit use of television, telephone, music, food and other distractions during study-time. It is true that we can do and think approximately 7 things at once — but only *one* well!
6. Give appropriate gifts that reinforce good study habits and interests: magazine/book subscriptions, tickets to activities/interesting places (museums, galleries, conventions, plays, field trips), gift certificates (book/computer/office supply stores, plant shops, art markets), hobby equipment (photography, astronomy, geology, etc.).
7. Expose your child to varied, intellectual and age-appropriate educational opportunities. Often, gifted children pursue their current passions so intensely that they need a nudge to experience (if only briefly) other areas of involvement and learning. Be a host family for foreign students. Be active in clubs and associations. Find mentors to help your child pursue a particular passion or one related to it; locate volunteers in the community willing to be shadowed.
8. Join groups and committees such as parent support, curriculum advisory and gifted/talented within your school/district. Don't be afraid to be a P^3 (Positively Persuasive Parent). Become knowledgeable about your school/district (teacher/administrative positions and personnel, political hierarchy) and committees at various levels (working procedures, past histories).
9. Volunteer in your children's schools whenever possible and appropriate. Discuss this with the children first and make arrangements accordingly.
10. Contact teachers on a regular basis. Follow through with commitments made to individualize/differentiate curriculum to meet your gifted students' needs. Remember: plans initiated from early contact or conferences are not necessarily maintained!
11. Find ways to reward positive teaching/interaction of school personnel: thank you notes, small gift certificates (book store, office supply).
12. Understand and support teachers' classroom rules. Early communication with questions or remarks is most helpful. Also, daily, consistently and fairly apply your home study-time rules.
13. Communication with teachers/administrators regarding your child's specific learning needs and interests as early as possible. Be sensitive to teachers' time and classroom demands but appropriately inform them about your gifted student in a positive manner.
14. Listen to any concerns, ideas (and excuses!) your children share. To you, some of these may not seem realistic or particularly stressful, but the fact that issues are raised is a clear indication that they are indeed real and meaningful to the students. Gifted students can be extremely perceptive and intuitive (and right); many often take things very seriously and believe they can handle things by themselves. Make time to casually "touch base" and inquire how they're doing in all aspects of their lives and learning. Don't, however, make this exchange a quiz show by trying to encourage conversation with questions that can be answered with a yes, no or "I don't know."

(Continued on next page)

ParentSpace

Continued from page 5

and encourage them to be themselves, however that may translate in a particular day or moment. Like the other afternoon, for example, when I happened to look in on my son. He was down on the floor of his room, happily marshaling his own armies of Z-Bots, his treasured boombox nearby and an Aerosmith CD cranked to the max.

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Learning to Learn

Continued from page 7

15. Take immediate action – discussion with child, conference with school personnel – should a youngster demonstrate sudden changes in personality, friends or personal habits.

Make the time to be continually and positively involved in all aspects of your gifted children's learning. It is one precious lifetime gift.

> *It's not the spurt at the start, but the continued unresting, unhasting advance that wins the day.*
>
> Anonymous

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Gloria Frender, an educational consultant from Colorado, has taught elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary and is the mother of two gifted children. She is the author of ***Learning to Learn*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success.***

Middle Schools

Continued from page 1

sessions, movies and parties on a daily basis; with funding Damon obtained from the school's parent organization, the program also is available 365 days each year. Thanks to recent media coverage, two service clubs in the city are considering expansion of the program to other neighborhoods.

After learning about small business operations in her middle school, Shonda decided to create a sitting service modeled after the process depicted in the *Babysitter's Club* books she enjoys reading. Shonda found that by organizing her friends collaboratively, they could relieve each other when personal commitments interfered with sitting opportunities. Now with 24 8th-grade sitters coordinated together, Shonda has found that her company has virtually monopolized babysitting in the area. To ensure quality of all the sitters, Shonda has used some of the company profits gleaned from each sitter's pay to develop a training program taught by certified child-care workers.

Other than being middle school students who continue to engage in remarkable accomplishments despite their youth, what is it that Allison, Damon and Shonda have in common? Each of these young people has been stimulated to various types of creative productive behavior because of events and circumstances in their schools — *middle* schools. Thanks to the school climate, the nature of curriculum and instruction, the purposeful effort to identify and clarify student interests and the acknowledgment that those interests need to influence individualized programming, each of these young people continues to demonstrate gifted behavior (Renzulli, 1978; Renzulli & Reis, 1985). Given each student's above-average ability, creativity and task commitment, their middle schools have been structured in a manner that promotes exploration of fields of study that are not traditionally included in schools. The schools also provide a diverse array of experiences to enhance learning of process skills and encourage students to function like practicing professionals. Allison, Damon, and Shonda are not merely *like* the scientific writer, the social reformer and the entrepreneur, they *are* professionals in their respective fields.

Still, there are many middle schools that do not appear to produce the kind of exciting outcomes illustrated by Allison, Damon and Shonda. Are these three young people significantly more capable than most other students their age? Are the schools they attend better equipped and better funded than those elsewhere? Are their schools structured to allow school time for projects like those described? What exactly do these three case descriptions have in common?

Leadership by Example

Some important characteristics are shared by leadership at each of the middle schools these students attend. First, each of the three middle school principals has established a scheduling system that places students and their needs first. Contrast schools that include flexible mini course offerings designed around student interest assessments with other middle-grade schools that expect new students to switch over the

(Continued on next page)

Middle Schools

Continued from page 8

summer from the student-centered environment of elementary schools to a high school-style curriculum-centered program. In each of the case-subjects' schools, the principal has guided faculty to develop a scheme for offering a smorgasbord of exploratory courses while ensuring student mastery of basic academic and life skills. Exploration is not only highly appropriate for adolescents, but it is a critical component for stimulating creativity and productivity among sufficiently intense students that they might continue creative productive work as adults (Torrance & Myers, 1970).

Second, the principals involved have mandated that formal student interest assessment be conducted on at least an annual basis and that the faculty be trained to appraise interest more frequently on an informal basis. Interest-based learning has been found to personalize schooling to such a degree that reversal of problems has taken place among gifted students with behavioral concerns, underachievement and learning disabilities (Emerick, 1988; Baum, 1988; Olenchak, 1995). Tailoring at least some of school to the individual interests of students discretely delivers a powerful message to learners: that school is willing to account for who *you* are and what *you* care about. Particularly during adolescence, when youngsters are prone to question their own worth, middle schools that personalize some activities and curriculum can reinforce students' sense of belonging (Coleman, 1992).

Third, the acute developmental needs prevalent among adolescents have driven the three principals to lead faculty in designing programs that account for the delicate social and emotional status of middle schoolers. In general, young adolescents are amidst the most uncertain time in the entire human developmental cycle. Formulation of attitudes and beliefs during adolescence will, in all probability, serve as foundations for adult roles. Consequently, the middle school movement that developed during the 1960's and has since gradually grown nationwide, emphasizes the treatment of students as individuals in a protective setting, allowing for exploration of subjects and fields of study. Middle schools typically are organized to ease young people from the cocoon-like atmosphere of elementary schools into the too-frequent aloofness prevalent in many comprehensive high schools. The notion is that middle schools can allow the experimentation in thinking and experience that is bound to arise during early adolescence but can do so within a controlled, caring environment in which students and teachers are often teamed.

Finally, these three exemplary schools are supervised by principals who view themselves not only as managers of schedules, budgets, testing and public relations but as master teachers who place instruction, curriculum development and learning above all else. Such leaders expect to nurture gifted behavior in as many students as can manifest it and do not restrict *a priori* enrichment and acceleration options only to students who present high test scores. Rather, operating on a conception of multiple abilities similar to that articulated by Gardner (1983), these principals have worked to uncover and nurture the diversity of student potentialities present in their schools. Further, they have designed and implemented programs to identify and draw on the range of skills, aptitudes and interests among their faculties. Imagine the school in which students as well as their teachers feel as though their personal needs, desires and interests receive at least some attention in the course of business!

Ambiance: All for One and One for All

Middle school principals, especially at a time when there is continuing emphasis on such localized administrative techniques as site-based management, occupy positions that are truly pivotal regarding education of young adolescents. The school climate is definitively within the purview of the principal, and she or he can seriously influence the ways in which pupils, teachers and curricula interact to bring about learning. While principals have long been important in school operations, now more than ever, the enormous degree of responsibility for educational leadership vested in principals can meaningfully alter what happens, how it takes place and who is involved.

One of the traits identified among the three schools represented in the cases described earlier is that of teacher collaboration. Studies of school improvement strategies have consistently identified teacher collaboration, including team planning and team instruction, as the most important variable in successful schools (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Raywid, 1993; Stigler & Stevenson, 1991). In their well-known school improve-

(Continued on next page)

Middle Schools

Continued from page 9

ment system, which concomitantly provides for talent development and appropriate educational provisions for gifted students, Renzulli and Reis (1985) have noted that the Schoolwide Enrichment Model is intended to bring about comprehensive school change by extending many of the provisions traditionally associated with gifted education to students and teachers throughout whole schools. Examinations of Schoolwide Enrichment have produced positive results where the program model has been implemented as prescribed: through a purposeful collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents and the general community (Renzulli, 1994; Renzulli & Reis, 1994). The schools referenced in this study each contain differing mechanisms for encouraging collaboration, but each of them provides means for teacher teaming within the contexts of planning and teaching.

One of the schools contains schools within the school, in which teachers serve as members of teams assigned to groups of students with the teams of teachers and children remaining as a unit through all three of that middle school's grades. Though there are potential disadvantages if a particular student and a particular teacher do not get along effectively, the advantages of this concept for young adolescents, as well as for their teachers, are numerous. Students and teachers develop a sense of continuity and consistency with each other, and teachers are more likely to be able to gauge instruction and curricular development to student needs and interests; this parallels successes in gifted education attributable to students working with the same gifted program resource teacher for several years. Moreover, security as well as the possibilities for development of mentor relationships (Goertzel, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978; Torrance, 1984), both of which enhance emergence of high levels of creativity and productivity, are built into this arrangement. Although the personal interests and needs of students and teachers are componential, there is always the emphasis on working collegially to the benefit of the team. Perhaps this model has special attractiveness as so many families have experienced instability, the children often being unfamiliar with team and family spirit.

The principal in this school has established herself as the "mother figure" in charge of all of the teams, students and teachers alike. As principal in this circumstance, she is viewed by all as the chief nurturer of talent and less as either disciplinarian or bureaucrat. Often, she works in classrooms with teachers and pupils; her presence in classes is viewed much like a loving parent's presence might be seen by her happy children. This role is further reinforced by the fact that this principal exercises shared authority with teachers and students. She is apt to relieve a teacher, taking over that particular role on an instructional team, so that the teacher can represent the school at any number of central office meetings. Disciplinary actions are not the sole responsibility of the principal and teachers; instead, students themselves exercise some authority as they act somewhat jury-like in analyzing and determining the outcomes of various student violations.

This principal has commissioned her teachers and students as contributors to the entire educational venture; everyone is important. For students with potential for gifted behavior, such ambiance would likely stimulate the kinds of incredible consequences as illustrated by Damon's social service activities. Yet, many pupils other than Damon have behaved in a gifted manner, producing outstanding projects, works of art and creative problem solving whether or not they were formally identified as gifted students.

Investment: Improvement for All, One by One

Curiously, one of the critical characteristics of the three middle school principals is a simple, yet often overlooked, logical step for all good principals to take in their leadership. Each of the three principals has committed to the development of his/her school faculties as the primary means for enhancing talent identification and development throughout their schools. In contrast, many school enhancement programs have disregarded improvement of teachers as individuals as perhaps the only real way to achieve overall schoolwide improvement (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Fullan, 1991). Most schools attempt to improve themselves by effecting change on nearly every component of education *except* individual teachers: new textbooks, new curriculum plans, new teaching methods, new furniture, new buildings. It is much less frequent that schools invest in developing the talents of their teachers, but each of the exemplary middle schools shares this trait.

The principal of Shonda's school

(Continued on next page)

Middle Schools

Continued from page 10

obtained district approval to extend the length of each school day by one additional hour, Monday through Thursday. On Friday, however, students leave the school at noon, creating a four-hour block of time for teacher professional development every week. This time is in addition to planning/professional development periods already built into the daily schedules of each teacher. The Friday sessions have been used for addressing personally-tailored professional development plans; similar to the individual education programs used with students in special education, these plans are geared to the individual circumstances of each teacher. While there are occasional group in-service activities during the Friday afternoon sessions, the vast majority of them are spent by teachers working in small groups or one-on-one with experts identified to acquaint them with new skills, strategies and techniques. Schoolwide, the emphasis, as defined by the principal, has been on professional development activities likely to enhance development of students' individual strengths. Hence, the principal has invested in developing the gifts of his teachers as a means for nurturing the gifts of his pupils.

In order to convince the school board to approve his idea, one that was designed by the faculty, the principal hosted, and personally paid for, a coffee and dessert party one evening at which he announced the idea. He explained to his parent-guests how development of the teachers with nothing short of the best skills would, in all probability, improve the school overall as well as the opportunities for each child to maximize development of his/her potential. The result was overwhelming parental approval in a community not especially well-educated; the school board, sensing the parental ground swell, had no choice but to approve the plan, one that remains in effect since that coffee party ten years ago.

Since that time, teachers and principal working collaboratively have implemented a number of school improvements, but none of them has been adopted without a solid base of teacher training beforehand. Benefiting from a variety of interesting teaching methods that enhance basic curriculum, students select from a large menu of mini courses that changes each six weeks; teachers have been able to provide instruction in a number of disciplines not ordinarily addressed in middle school curricula. One of these courses sparked Shonda's idea to develop her own babysitting business. Other mini courses have prompted students at the school to develop original music and dance, to create their community's first and only recycling system and to convince the city council to protect a parcel of undeveloped land.

Test scores, incidentally, have improved significantly during the same period, but the school's community has expressed far more interest in the development of student talents and gifts than in higher test scores. Such sophisticated judgment among parents is due to the training provided *them* through meetings and short educational monthly notes sent home personally from the principal. Without a principal who is just as likely to sit on the floor counseling a group of 6th graders about test-taking skills as he is to arrange a mentor to help improve a teacher's ability to teach 8th-grade mathematics, these results would not have been realized.

Purpose: Harmonizing, One at a Time

A final important feature of middle schools identified in the case studies is leadership, characterized by dedication to the individual but only as he or she can join the many. Harmonious, consistent, unified schools and school communities are likely to produce students who tend to be better adjusted to life's vagaries (Fullan, 1993). While development of individual ability is paramount to a strong self-concept, the development of each individual as a contributing member of a larger society is critical to a strong society. All three principals typify this trait in their interactions in and with their schools, but one principal, in particular, has adopted this cause as her primary platform for working with students, teachers and parents.

The principal at Allison's relatively poor, rural middle school concentrates on developing each person's self-concept by working directly with pupils, teachers and parents through various counseling strategies. A former counselor and school psychologist, she has embarked on developing giftedness in as many adults and children as can manifest those behaviors by first strengthening self-concept. As a result, she is seldom found doing deskwork; rather, she provides individual and small group counseling to students and teachers during school hours and to small groups of parents at tea parties she hosts

(Continued on next page)

Middle Schools

Continued from page 11

in the evenings and on weekends.

In addition to structuring her school into teams and offering students and adults participation in numerous enrichment and acceleration activities, as at the other two exemplary middle schools, she has become an integral part of the school "family" by serving as confidante to virtually everyone. Teachers look forward to faculty meetings because they often serve as catharsis for difficulties of both a group and personal nature; the result is that the faculty see themselves as interdependent, each one socially and emotionally reinforcing the others. Similarly, through examination of the social and emotional needs we all experience at one time or other and by emphasizing empathy, the principal has managed to promote group harmony among students. While pupils celebrate each other's personal victories and support one another during times of crisis, they are just as likely to examine and discuss how those personal celebrations and disappointments influence *everyone* in the group. Philosophically, the principal, through her own behavior, has modeled how caring, humane individuals best contribute to the functioning of a group.

To reinforce her role with children, this principal has structured the school schedule so that each student has a biweekly one-to-one advisory session with a teacher who teaches on the youngster's team. The character of such advisory sessions is one aimed at strengthening the individual but, at the same time, emphasizing how the individual can best contribute his/her talents to the needs of the team. According to one parent, this approach has created a school where "everybody is just as likely to cry together as they are to laugh together." Teachers, treated in the same fashion, have been known to work as a single, unified team to accomplish tasks. Writing new curriculum, an onerous job often parceled out in most schools, was tackled and completed by the faculty during only two weekend retreats. These retreats were financed by the principal with only partial assistance from the school system.

Conclusion

No part of the educational process is unimportant, but the crucial role of the middle school in bridging services extended to young children and those offered to young adults is unequivocal. Middle schools that have focused on development of student abilities, enhancing the likelihood that gifts and talents are identified and nurtured, are guided by special principals. In fact, such individuals likely deserve some other title because their accomplishments far exceed the duties traditionally assigned to and expected of principals. They are dedicated to optimal development of each student and of each teacher; they will risk nothing in order to structure the school so that it enhances such development of children and adults; and they believe that by enhancing opportunities for the individual, the opportunities for the many will also be enhanced.

Middle school principals, like their counterparts at other grade and age levels, increasingly have the authority to operate their schools in any manner so long as they adhere to legal regulations. Principals, therefore, are positioned to create schools that either appreciate gifts and talents or deny them. Far too often, principals can become so embroiled in school district bureaucracy that the real reasons they sought the role have become forgotten; due to the susceptibility of middle school-aged youngsters to developmental changes in mind and body, middle school principals must avoid the bureaucratic trap. Schools without definitive leaders — not merely managers — are likely to miss the mark, the abilities and needs of students and teachers falling aside. If middle schools are to succeed in their bridging role, they must be guided by sincere, capable individuals who are willing to do virtually anything to support, institute programs and personalize schooling in advocating for the maximal development of *each* child's talents and gifts. The impact of such *active* advocacy at the middle school level is best summarized in the reflections of a gifted, learning-disabled 10th-grader:

> *I always felt like I was different from everybody else in the world, and I am. It used to be that this difference I felt was negative, everyone else didn't have to fight as hard as I did to succeed in school. Then, one day, I realized that I was no more or less different than anyone else — that we're all different... that we all have something to offer. It just took some different kinds of real experiences to show me it was okay to be who I am... that I don't always have to be on the receiving side of help but that I have the ability to help others, too. (Olenchak, 1994, p. 51).*

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(Continued on next page)

Middle Schools

Continued from page 12

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Materials

Continued from page 1

An important reminder here, before we delve into specific ideas and materials: in working with upper elementary and middle school students it is essential to match activities and materials with the strengths of individual students. It does no good to design a writing curriculum for a student whose strength is math or math extension activities for the student who is verbally precocious. In addition, because the very definition of "giftedness" is ambiguous and our identification procedures are not without fault, I encourage teachers to open their minds to students who may not be formally identified as gifted and talented and/or who may just have a strong interest in a specific area. Trust your gut feeling. If you think a student might benefit from a certain activity, include him or her.

Ronvik (1993) declares, "We should have come to the conclusion by now that there is no curriculum per se, nor is there any method of teaching per se, that is suitable only for the gifted. The differentiation is in *pacing* and *depth* only. Gifted program classes should take on the same subject matter as the school's regular program. However, these classes should be accelerated—that is, go faster and introduce subjects earlier than the regular program, and they should be enriched—that is, go into far greater depth and intensity than in the regular program" (p. 10).

The activities and materials that I list here allow for faster pace by introducing concepts that would normally be saved for later grades. They allow for greater depth by extending and enriching the normal curriculum. The activities may be modified to work in a variety of situations, and they may be used either in the classroom or in a pull-out situation. When provided with a safe environment, where they will not be criticized for their thoughts, most high-ability students at this age long to participate in intellectually challenging discussions. The activities listed here encourage kids to analyze material and form their own opinions.

Study of Immigration—can be used as an extension of autobiographies, U.S. history of immigration or current American issues, while incorporating reading and language skills.

Greenhaven Press, Inc. (1-800-231-5163) publishes a series called *Opposing Viewpoints*® suitable for grades 3 through post secondary. This series of books contains a wide variety of high interest, important issues which are explored through opposing viewpoints of authorities in a particular field. Primary sources are used in a pro/con format. Titles are offered over a wide variety of reading levels. Often the regular school curriculum exposes students to only one viewpoint of a current or historical event; the *Opposing Viewpoints*® series allows students to explore more than one side of the story and encourages deeper understanding of issues along

(Continued on next page)

Materials

Continued from page 13

with the use of critical thinking.

When I teach this particular class, students read a book from the *Opposing Viewpoints® Juniors* series entitled *Immigration* (Szumski & Duggey, 1989). It is a relatively thin book, with a reading level for grades 4-6 and an interest level for grades 4-12, in which three issues are debated:

- Should illegal immigration be stopped?
- Should legal immigration be restricted?
- Does bilingual education benefit non-English-speaking children?

Imbedded in these three issues are three propaganda techniques which the students learn about:

- scare tactics
- testimonial
- card-stacking.

The combination of these issues and techniques always results in lively discussions. In addition to reading the book, several speakers have joined us, adding their personal perspectives centering around the above issues. We have had:

- an inspector from the U.S. Department of Immigration,
- a man who had tried to immigrate to the United States before he was sent to a Nazi concentration camp but was caught up in the quota system,
- a panel of high school students from various third world countries who had recently immigrated to the United States and were now enrolled in ESL classes.

As a final activity, each student is required to choose one of the three issues and take a pro or con stance and make a presentation to the group supporting that stance. Each of the propaganda techniques must be used at least once in the presentation.

Following the study of immigration, students read the book *Goodbye, Vietnam* by Gloria Whelan (1992). This is the story of a girl and her family who, for political reasons, illegally immigrate from a village in Vietnam to Hong Kong in hope of being sent to an accepting, free country. Many aspects of Vietnamese culture are discussed, including the differences between those who live in the rural areas and large-city dwellers. The journey to Hong Kong is filled with many difficult times, and once the family arrives in Hong Kong they are frustrated and frightened by the threat of being sent back to their native country.

Whenever possible, I have students buy their own paperback edition of a book we read. I challenge the proverbial no-no of writing in a book, sharing with them my method for writing, underlining and highlighting in my own copy: thought-provoking questions are written in the margins, similes, metaphors, idioms, etc. are highlighted, and turning points of the story are marked. In the case of *Goodbye, Vietnam*, definitions of foreign words were underlined. Many times, I think it is easy for students to breeze through a book and not thoroughly understand it. Writing in their own copies forces them to slow down and analyze as they read.

Having been unable to locate a teacher's guide or novel study for *Goodbye, Vietnam*, students decided to write their own novel study with the hope of having others use this product. To find common elements between the units, they analyzed other novel studies and decided on activities which would help future students learn vocabulary, comprehend the story and analyze their feelings about various events in the book. They also felt it was important to include activities which would address a variety of learning styles and to offer choices of activities in order to reach various interest levels. They did an excellent job writing this novel study and are now in the process of seeking a publisher.

***Newsweek* Study Group**—a great alternative to regular reading groups. *Newsweek* can be used to study current events and historical trends, build vocabulary, find more difficult spelling words within the context of an article, study the five themes of geography, study propaganda techniques (including advertising) and as a stimulus for writing assignments.

There is no problem here with students complaining that they have already read the book on which you plan to spend the next six weeks, as this is guaranteed to be new material, relevant to the students' lives and of high interest.

Group subscriptions to *Newsweek* (1-800-526-2595) are available at greatly reduced student rates, with the teacher receiving one free, for as few as 18 weeks. Numerous free teacher-support materials are available, including computer software, maps, posters and teachers' guides. Though many of the support materials are geared more toward the high school student, you can pick and choose what you want to use as well as modify assignments. My favorite reference for teachers is the *Cross-Curriculum Teacher's*

(Continued on next page)

Materials

Continued from page 14

Guide, which is filled with 110 pages of generic ideas for use with any issue of *Newsweek*.

When working with *Newsweek*, I usually use the following procedure. I hand copies of the magazine out as soon as I get them, and, depending on scheduling, the students have anywhere from a few days to an entire week to read articles that appeal to them. Most of the time I do not assign specific articles because I want students to "buy in" to the idea of reading by making their own choices. At our scheduled meeting time we summarize and discuss articles in which they have shown interest—everyone need not read the same thing. Often the topics are debatable and stimulate discussions that reach even reluctant students. We also often discuss why a particular article was written at this time and how an event affects our own lives.

I have often been questioned about the wisdom in using such an adult magazine with young children, with parents and teachers expressing concern about the students' exposure to controversial adult issues. Over the years I have conducted numerous *Newsweek* groups and find that if the students are allowed to choose material that interests them, they almost always steer away from those articles questioned by the adults.

I usually alternate the free-choice discussion approach with a more structured lesson, often pulling ideas from the *Cross-Curriculum Teacher's Guide* which offers many creative ways to teach story and photograph analysis and vocabulary skills enhancement.

Choose-Your-Own-Adventure-Type Stories—an alternative to the regular writing assignment. This could also be combined with computer skills using one of the hyper-type programs.

This is an assignment sure to challenge your students' skills in organization while leaving lots of room for creative writing. Though it can be accomplished by individuals, it is probably less frustrating when done in a group of students with like abilities.

There are a number of series of books on the market (most written for younger children) that allow readers to make choices about which actions the hero/heroine will take. For example, "You join the circus. Do you want to be a clown, or a juggler? If you want to be a clown, go to page 3. If you want to be a juggler, go to page 10." Throughout the book, readers are given many choices.

After reviewing a number of these books together, give each group a large piece of paper to "map" the story they will write and choose the number of pages to be included (24 is a good place to start). The book should have several endings (some good, and some bad).

All writing begins on page one, giving readers a problem as soon as possible. The four basic problems that may be presented are:

- person against person
- person against nature
- person against society
- person against self.

Find examples of the four types of problems in other books, movies or current events and discuss them so that students have a full understanding of the concepts.

Students actually draw out the various plots for their stories using circles representing each choice and arrows showing the direction of the story from page to page. (For a more detailed explanation, see Marks, 1994.) With the exception of page one, numbers can arbitrarily be assigned to pages.

Allow plenty of time for this project. If talented writers know their books will be "published" and shared with others, they will want to work very hard. When the book is finished it can be illustrated by the writers, or other talented artists in the class can assume that job.

Historical Connections in Mathematics—Extend and enrich your mathematics curriculum while teaching students about important historical figures and their theories.

The AIMS Education Foundation publishes a series of three books: *Historical Connections in Mathematics, Volumes I, II, and III* (grades 4-10). These books take a non-traditional route to enriching the subject of mathematics. Each volume includes a series of ten seemingly (at least to look at) boring mathematicians and reveals captivating stories about their personal lives. Imbedded in these stories are individual theories and discoveries. After learning about the mathematicians' personal lives, students use a series of worksheets to "discover" many of the same ideas which originated with these individuals. To underscore the relevance of these important figures, the significance of their discoveries made many years ago is linked to

(Continued on next page)

Materials

Continued from page 15

today's world. It is always fun working with groups of students when using these books, but I have also seen success in teachers simply handing the books to high functioning math students to study on their own and then share with others.

Independent Study—a good tool to use after a student compacts out of a specific curriculum. This incorporates both traditional and non-traditional research skills and presentation techniques.

There are many ways to structure independent studies. One successful method has been to allow each student to choose any subject of interest, academic or non-academic (I actually encourage the non-academic). Not pursued in a traditional sense with notecards, outlines and written reports, this method is executed with an eye to a "Hollywood style" completed project. With every piece of information gathered, the student considers the most interesting way to present the material to fellow students. Multi-media presentations are encouraged. Timelines are set up for providing small-group check-in times, offering mutual encouragement and suggestions and finding resources. Ultimately, a project fair is held where other students from the school come to see the finished products. Each presenter wears clothing reflecting his/her theme and has a "booth," a table filled with a variety of ways that demonstrate what has been learned. Also required is some type of activity in which visiting students can participate and learn about the topic at the same time. Visiting students wander from booth to booth, and it is the responsibility of the presenter to hawk his or her topic to attract visitors. One student might study scuba diving; her booth might consist of an ongoing video, actual scuba equipment (borrowed from a scuba store), a demonstration of the use of the equipment, a world map marked with the best scuba sites, examples of coral and shells, charts of fish found in the ocean and other miscellaneous charts and graphs. Visitors to the booth might receive written information on the necessary steps in becoming qualified to scuba dive.

Super Sentences—useful as spelling and/or vocabulary extensions for students who pretest out of these subjects.

Super Sentences: Challenging Vocabulary Activities for Students in Grades 3-12 (Winebrenner, 1989) provides sentences using various levels of advanced vocabulary which need to be translated into more common words.

Geometry Unit—a replacement unit for grades 4-6.

Polyhedraville: Investigating Geometry (Creative Publications, 1-800-624-0822) is a unit designed to replace your math text for four to six weeks and can be used with a group as small as 12 or with the entire class. If used with an entire class, you will find that some students will take it much farther than others, so you may want to create one separate cooperative high-math-ability learning group. *Polyhedraville* provides students with a lasting foundation in solid geometry. Students work together on 13 sequential lessons to design and build a model colony of the future, all within a limited budget. They progress from two-dimensional polygons, to the construction of polyhedra, to the building of a city based on polyhedral shapes.

There are so many wonderful products and ideas available for working with high-ability students. If you take the time, you will probably find that your greatest resources for ideas are your fellow teachers and your library-media specialist. Try to arrange for your school to have regular times when teachers are able to exchange ideas and talk about materials and strategies that have worked for them. Some districts even allow teachers to form study groups from which they earn recertification credit. Such a group would be a great place to start searching out materials.

See page 18 for more resources.

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Carol Fertig has worked with students K-12 as a classroom teacher, gifted/talented resource teacher, homebound teacher, tutor and mentor. She is the owner and publisher of ***Gifted Education Review*** and a gifted/talented resource teacher for Cherry Creek Schools in Colorado.

Creative Ventures

Great Women of the Century

One of my favorite ways of nudging young readers toward biography is to play an intellectual game challenging them to name the most influential individuals of the year, decade or century. Of course, answers are relative; there are no "right" ones, only individual and consensus choices. The fun is in reflecting upon creative and courageous people who have truly made a difference in our lives and then in marshaling the intellectual support for our choices. Since 1995 is the 75th anniversary year of Women's Suffrage, it seems appropriate to focus upon extraordinary women who have enriched life in this century and who have made a difference in the opportunities available to all people. Here, then, is the question for this creative voyage: Who are the five most exceptional American women of the 20th century?

My first nominee is the biologist and author **Rachel Carson**. A few years ago at a convention of publishers a poll was taken to determine the consensus answer to what was the most influential book published in the United States in the past 50 years. The overwhelming choice of publishers was Carson's book *The Silent Spring*, published in 1962, which warned the nation and the world of the great hazards that chemicals, especially pesticides, pose to all living things. Through her intense observation of nature and her courageous writings, Carson created the still-flourishing environmental movement.

Eleanor Roosevelt exhibited both creative and courageous leadership in this century. Her personal leadership in the late 30s was most notable. In 1939 the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) refused world-famous African-American singer Marian Anderson the right to perform in concert at the D.A.R.-owned Constitution Hall in Washington, D. C. Decades before prominent whites began to join with African-Americans in combating racial prejudice, Mrs. Roosevelt resigned her D.A.R. membership in protest and used her influence as First Lady to secure the Lincoln Memorial for Miss Anderson's performance. 75,000 people were present to hear Anderson sing "America the Beautiful," while millions more listened on national radio broadcasts.

In 1925, classical Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini told **Marian Anderson**, "A voice like yours is heard once in 100 years." But because of racial prejudice in this country, Anderson was acknowledged in Europe as a brilliant classical performer a decade before her first American triumph at New York's Town Hall in 1935. At the age of 57 in 1955, she became the first black performer in the Metropolitan Opera Company. Anderson also performed at the inaugurals of both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, and she was the United States Delegate to the United Nations in 1958. Never one to castigate those who burdened her with discrimination, she spoke these powerful words in an interview on CBS television in 1957: "As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might."

Georgia O'Keeffe was not only a great artist, producing new ways of seeing the world, but she also broke down many barriers of the previously all-male American art world. When she arrived in New York in the second decade of the century, the works of American women artists displayed in American museums were all but nonexistent. With the spirited support of her husband Alfred Stieglitz, O'Keeffe changed all that, blazing a trail for all the talented women artists who have followed. O'Keeffe used shapes, space, line and color to show the natural world in distinctive and highly original ways. Her paintings of flowers and bones forced viewers to see these objects in completely new ways, and she gave the world distinctive, universally recognized images of the great American Southwest.

Amelia Earhart was another of the century's great breakers of barriers. In 1928, she became the first woman to cross the Atlantic by airplane, and in 1932 and 1933 she set records for non-stop transcontinental flights from Los Angeles to New Jersey. In 1935 she was the first person to fly solo to Honolulu from California (10

(Continued on next page)

Great Women

Continued from page 17

men had perished attempting the 2,400 mile trip) and was the first person to fly solo across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Her many record-setting air accomplishments made her a celebrity, and she also became a vital symbol in demonstrating that there were few, if any, careers or fields women could not enter and conquer. Although her final Pacific flight remains shrouded in mystery, there is no doubt that Earhart was a courageous and trailblazing pilot.

Children and young adults can be asked: Whom do you think should be on the list of great American women of the century? Would your list include Lucille Ball, Dorothea Lange or Pearl Buck? Perhaps Barbara McClintock, Julia Child or Barbara Jordan? *A Century of Women* and *Herstory: Women Who Changed the World* are two recent books that examine great women who have changed the world with their creative efforts.

A list of notable women can be a beginning. Teachers and parents can employ the biography game at any time and in any place. About to leave on a car trip? Try some of these questions: Who are the five greatest athletes working today? Who are the five best musicians alive today? Who are the five best writers in American literature? And *why*? Such questions are guaranteed to provoke both salutary thinking and gratifying conversation.

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Jerry Flack is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Other Publishers Carrying Materials Particularly Suited to Activities for High Ability Learners

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Any books by Jerry Flack are worthwhile. Many involve a variety of language arts skills, and all include higher-level thinking skills and creativity.

– Carol Fertig

Above and Beyond

The Willing Struggle

Have you ever seen a college application that asks for a student's elementary or middle school transcript? I know I haven't. From this, we might conclude that high grades are more important in high school. If that's the case and grades don't matter for younger kids, then the most important school lesson for them is to understand that true learning requires struggle. They must also grasp that really successful students continually strive to grow in their learning. Too often what seems to happen is that many highly capable students perceive their job to be one of finding out exactly what's required and then doing nothing that exceeds the teacher's basic expectations. Why is this so?

Sylvia Rimm (1994) points out that the surest path to high self-esteem is to be successful at something the learner has perceived to be difficult. Each time we *steal a student's struggle*, we steal an opportunity for self-esteem to be strengthened.

Teachers in elementary and middle schools are dedicated to the development and maintenance of high self-esteem for all students. Ironically, this goal is often sabotaged by allowing gifted students to get high grades with little or no effort. One of my former students concluded before the end of the second week of school that, as a teacher, I was a "12-minute A." That was all the time he had to spend on a piece of writing that would "earn" him that grade from me. Consistent experiences of this sort lead many students to conclude that in order to be considered smart, they must make it appear that learning comes easily. True intelligence, these young students must learn, is reflected in one's willingness to work on something that is challenging.

In order to facilitate all students' opportunities to experience challenging learning, teachers should be willing to determine who already knows the lesson or concept that is about to be taught, give credit for what is known and then provide appropriate extension activities. Rather than pressure their children to do unchallenging work, parents should ask teachers to be willing to make provisions for this most significant lesson: the expectation of and value in struggling to learn.

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Susan Winebrenner, from Illinois, presents workshops on a variety of topics, but her first love is teaching gifted children. She is the author of ***Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.***

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December 4-6, 1995 **Illinois Gifted Education Conference,** Springfield, Brenda Fustin, (708)798-6600/FAX (708)798-6609.

February 23, 1996, **Beyond Giftedness III**, Arvada, Colorado. Keynote presentation: Jeffrey Freed--The Gifted Child as Visual Learner. Contact Open Space Communications, 1-800-494-6178, (303) 444-7020/FAX (303) 545-6505.

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The March/April, 1996 issue of ***Understanding Our Gifted*** will focus on Parenting the Gifted: advice, school and curriculum alternatives, home resources, challenge...and more. We will also launch a new feature, a forum for discussion of what is important in the lives of gifted children and those who live and work with them. Share your views and opinions, your successes and frustrations, your expertise and your dreams. We'll publish them in *your* new column!

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Visual Learners

Guest Editor
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January/February, 1996

Volume 8, Issue 3

Upside Down: Visual-Spatial Talents and Technological Change

Thomas G. West

For hundreds of years, the technology of the written word has dominated much of education and the workplace. However, this is about to change, turning upside down many long-standing, conventional beliefs.

With computer graphics, data visualization, networked global interconnection and supercomputing, it is becoming increasingly clear that we are moving from a world of words into a world of images. This transition promises to change everything, including our ideas about what is worth learning, what is worth doing, who is intelligent and who is gifted and talented.

Some of those working at the forefront of new technologies have seen the likely consequences of these trends for some time. For example, Larry Smarr (1994), professor of physics and astronomy and director of a supercomputing center, explains: "I have often argued in my public talks that the graduate education process that produces physicists is totally skewed to selecting those

(Continued on page 6)

INSIDE

FOCUS ON:
The Visual Learner

GUEST EDITOR
Thomas G. West

Highlight
Teaching Right
Techniques for Visual-Spatial Gifted Children
Jeffrey Freed 3

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 4

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 5

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 7

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 20

Life Lines New! 22

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 23

Special Expanded Edition

Visual-Spatial Learners: A New Perspective

Gerri Masson

Every day in our private practice we see children who are experiencing school problems. They come to us bearing a variety of labels: gifted, highly gifted, gifted LD, gifted ADD, gifted ADHD, visual-spatial learners, underachievers, etc. Most of these kids have never been adequately assessed by a multidisciplinary team, so what do these labels tell us? Not very much.

Jane Healy (1990) points out that in order to diagnose ADD and ADHD most doctors use subjective criteria such as behavior checklists filled out by parents and teachers. Some of the characteristics cited are:

- failure to finish things
- failure to listen
- difficulty concentrating or sticking to an activity
- acting before thinking
- shifting between activities
- difficulty in organization
- calling out in class / difficulty awaiting turn
- excessive physical activity.

Figure 1 (p.15) illustrates the problem that arises when characteristics fit several labels. Such subjective criteria are partially

(Continued on page 11)

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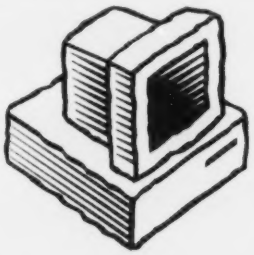
Understanding Our Gifted (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by **Open Space Communications, Inc.**, P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268. Subscriptions are $35 for 1 year (6 issues); Institutions $40. International subscriptions are $47 U.S. funds; International institutions $55. Back issues $8; International $10. Third class postage paid at Boulder, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *Understanding Our Gifted*, 1900 Folsom, Suite 108, Boulder, CO 80302, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright 1995, **Open Space Communications, Inc.** All rights reserved. (303)444-7020/FAX (303)545-6505, 1-800-494-6178.

Between the Lines



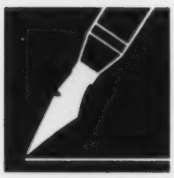
Visual-spatial learners, learning differences and disabilities, ADD, ADHD....confusing terms for both parents and teachers. And combined with the exceptionality of giftedness in our special children, these issues become even more formidable. How do we recognize children who fall into these categories? How can we be sure that the "labels" are accurate? How do we help them – and ourselves?

With all of this in mind, *Understanding Our Gifted* devotes this issue to **The Visual Learner,** clarifying not only what is meant by visual-spatial, but, as described by Editor Laura Goodman, offering "what, specifically, can be done to capitalize on the differences and integrate that child as smoothly and successfully as possible into today's academic settings and, by extension, into the greater world."

Guest Editor Tom West's article provides us with a philosophical/ theoretical base for connecting creative ability, visual thinking and academic learning difficulties with the available technology of the personal computer. Gerri Masson narrows theory into practicality, providing recommendations for what should be done in schools. And Jeff Freed offers parents and teachers methods that *really* work to help their own children and their students.

Few of us will read the information in this journal without relating it to children we know—or to ourselves. Be prepared for an *Aha!* experience.

D.K.



Teaching Right

Techniques for Visual-Spatial Gifted Children

Jeffrey Freed

Evan, at 5, had his parents and teachers worried. While he seemed bright and intensely creative, he didn't seem to "get it" when it came to letter recognition and other kindergarten reading-readiness activities. He was also reluctant to use a pencil in doing table work. Once a happy child, Evan was becoming surly, defensive and a "problem child" in school.

He was eventually diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and conventional IQ testing pronounced the little boy of "average" intelligence. His teachers speculated that he wouldn't learn to read until 3rd grade. One psychologist actually braced Evan's anxious parents for the probability that their 5 year old would someday become a juvenile delinquent.

The boy's mother and father were wrecks and unsure of what to do; eventually, they found me. I work one-on-one with gifted, right-brained and ADHD children. During my first session with Evan I figured out what was going on: he was a gifted (later testing put his IQ at 133), extremely right-brained child who was getting lost like so many other children in our very left-brained, sequential educational system.

I began working with Evan for about 30 minutes once a week and immediately noticed results. We established a friendly rapport, which brought down the "wall" that he had placed around himself. I gushed with praise, initially rewarding effort rather than results. For Evan, learning became fun again, instead of an ordeal. Soon he was recognizing words and over time became an enthusiastic reader. He began to use a pencil and within a few months was writing and doing three-column addition.

Not only is Evan now excelling academically, his new-found success has had a profound effect on his self-esteem. Evan likes himself! He's cheerful, open to

(Continued on page 16)

ParentSpace

Coming Clean

Confessions of a Recovering Right-Brain Learner

Forgive me, everyone, for I have sinned. Over and over again, committing one egregious crime after another through all the days and assignments of my school years, kindergarten straight through graduate school. I'm almost certain *they* never knew, but I did and believed myself a criminal.

Here are just a few items from my long list of offenses. To begin, I used my fingers for counting (still do, sometimes) because computing (like 15 - 6 or 6 x 7) didn't come easily; hence, along with everyone else, I believed I was poor at math. Word problems were an all-or-nothing proposition: I either conjured up the detailed life stories of the workmen measuring board feet and so was able to calculate how much lumber they should order, or, if an immediate answer was required, I blanked and produced no answer at all. Later, algebra was a show-your-work nightmare; I often had the answer but no work to show for it. The cones and cubes and triangles of geometry interested me, but the teacher and I were on parallel planes with never a hope of intersecting; I got a D. Science was fascinating but was, in too many uncomfortable and demanding ways, like math. In 9th-grade Earth Science Mr. Heller required memorization of all Earth's eras and periods, and I did try. Honest. Couldn't do that either, but what I did learn in about three seconds was the mnemonic device he offered as help: *Crusty Old Soldiers Drive Mules Pensively Perhaps To Jersey City*. Oh, those soldiers and their long-eared mules. . . Well, let's just say I followed them closely on their thoughtful journey eastward but could never manage to remember more than Jurassic and Triassic. My transgressions in these areas were legion but *nothing* compared to those committed in the realm of beloved language.

Because I'm recovering or trust that the educational statute of limitations on cheating has expired or that no one really cared anyway, I will confess what I considered the most onerous and lamentable of my sins. It was the 50s and 60s: I was smart, a student in advanced classes, would graduate with multiple honors and degrees, and I rigged and fibbed and falsified my way through a lot of it. My crimes, I understand now, were against education's left-brain program, not learning.

It started early, with book reports. As a kid I read zillions of books, but doing the required reports on them was drudgery. Because I was such a "good girl," I completed every assignment but, to preserve interest (and sanity), I made up the books as I wrote the reports — plot, characters, setting, number of pages, author's name, Dewey Decimal number: everything. I don't remember ever writing a book report on a real book. I didn't realize it then, of course, but it was great preparation for my life's work as a fiction writer.

Then came research, projects and term papers. Well, I was a perceptive kid in possession of vast amounts of general knowledge and creative wiles, which I used to extend and embellish some of those book-report techniques. Thanks to a smooth facility with words, a huge imagination and increasing boldness borne of silent desperation, the farther along in school I got, the easier, and more rewarding, "research" became. In 10th-grade honors English we had to give speeches. My first, "Car Accidents, Their Causes and Consequences" enjoyed a great success. Two friends carried in a sheet-shrouded life-sized-child doll dripping "blood," and from the opening narrative of the poor child's fatal accident to the gory and sobering, and mostly fictitious, facts and statistics about traffic accidents, the speech was a winner. I see now that in order to create that and other speeches, papers and projects I went to sometimes extreme lengths to gather and synthesize necessary information. It's just that none of it came from spending hours in the library, a place I despised (and still do), with its too-bright, ever-buzzing lights and tedious, over-alphabetized packaging of knowledge. I didn't then, but I now also see that I worked just as hard, or maybe harder, than the kids who spent time flipping through the card catalog and digging in the stacks for their authentically documented reference material. After the car accident speech, I was left with the sound of applause, a glowing A for a grade and the small, sick familiar feeling I'd stolen something. That's what school was like for me.

(Continued on page 6)

Sandra Berger

Surfing the Net

In this column's travels we'll find resources on disabilities. Let's start with Attention Deficit Disorders because there seems to be so much confusion in distinguishing between ADD and giftedness.

The site to visit for information on gifted children with disabilities is the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education at the AskERIC Virtual Library. *(Note: If you are not wired to the Net, you may contact this site at: 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091, 800/328-0272)* There you will find ERIC digests. The digest on "ADD and Children Who are Gifted" is particularly useful. To reach the library via gopher, at your system prompt, type: *gopher.ed.gov* and make the following selections:

— Educational Resources, Improvement, and Statistics (OERI & NCES)
— Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)/
— AskERIC
— ERIC Clearinghouses/ Components/
— ERIC Clearinghouses/
— ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education/
— Gifted

Or, you can take a World Wide Web shortcut by using the URL. If you receive an error message ("unable to connect to remote host") try again later. This is true for all gopher and Web sites.

URL: *http://gopher://ericir.syr.edu:70/11/Clearinghouses/16houses/ERIC_EC*

The sites listed below are good resources for accurate information on ADD. Keep in mind as you surf the Net that not everything is a good resource. Remember, too, that I check the sites listed just before *Understanding Our Gifted* goes to press, but the Internet is a dynamic environment and changes more rapidly than other information sources.

ADD WWW Archives
URL *http://www.sea.upenn.edu/~mengwong/ADD/*

This is an archive of information on the Web that pertains to ADD. There are references to hypertext files, mailing lists, and publications.
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National Institute on Mental Health article on ADD
URL: *gopher://zippy.nimh.nih.gov/00/documents/nimh/other/ADHD*
****

Doctor Grohol's 5 Best Web Sites
URL: *http://www.coil.com/~grohol/*

This site has information about ADD and is the path for the newsgroup alt.support.attn-deficit; as well as many other newsgroups and discussion groups.
****

CHADD (Children And Adults With Attention Deficit Disorder)
URL: *http://www.chadd.org/*

The CHADD organization's Web site includes numerous articles on parenting, classroom strategies, legal information, and controversial treatments. The site is very comprehensive. Its newletter gives timely information for parents and teachers on how to help children with ADD and ADHD to be successful. Several of the articles were written by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey, authors of *Driven to Distraction* (1994, New York: Touchstone.) You can find DSM-IV criteria at URL: *http://www.chadd.org/dsm_iv.htm*. CHADD does not maintain a gopher site.
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The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Facts for Families is a series of articles on a variety of topics. "Children Who Can't Pay Attention" can be found at:
URL: *http://www.psych.med.umich.edu/web/aacap/factsFam/noattent.htm*
****

If you can't reach the CHADD Web site, the DSM-IV criteria for ADD can also be found at:
URL: *http://web.cs.mun.ca/~jamie/dsm4.html*
****

Neurofeedback Archive
URL: *http://www.primenet.com/~ssnr/*
Includes an interesting article on "Neurological Basis and Neurofeedback Treatment of ADHD."
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Our final stop is Hood College, an extensive site for disability resources. Information on ADD can be located at:

(Continued on next page)

ParentSpace

Continued from page 4

A friend maintains that we have children, in part, to help us figure out our own lives, and I think there's some truth in that. We've got one of these exceptionally gifted right-brain, visual-spatial kids, and in identifying and understanding him I have met the child I was. Our lives here in the present grant me a consoling measure of retroactive clarity and offer the view to a healthier path in the future. For both of us, I know now why some simple things were/are so hard while other, far more complex ones were/are so ridiculously easy. I know I didn't steal my good grades and degrees; I *earned* them, though in novel ways which allowed me to survive in a left-brain and often alien world. It's already different for our son. Because his right-brain self is prone to explosion rather than implosion, we had no choice but to figure all this out early. Thank heavens the information was available.

For the guilty child, teenager and young adult I was who felt she had to sneak and stretch and fabricate to stay afloat in the academic world, I am sad; but I'm happy, too, that she's free now and on the mend. I'm grateful to my son for being who he is and for coming into my life, and I'm relieved and happy for him that things are different now. I hope I'm able to use what I've learned about us both to eke out that extra measure of grace and patience often necessary in parenting this most excellent and extraordinary brand of divergent child.

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Surfing the Net

Continued from page 5

URL:
gopher://merlin.hood.edu:9999/11gopher_root%3a%5bacademic.edu.special.specific%5d

You can also reach this resource by truncating the address. At your system prompt, type *gopher://merlin.hood.edu:9999/* and then follow the path:

Academic Departments —> Education —> Special Education Resources on the Internet (SERI) project.

The next time we meet, you will learn about some other major Internet sites that provide information on a wide variety of disabilities. See you on the Net.

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

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Interact!

We launch a new feature in the next issue of ***Understanding Our Gifted***, a forum for discussion of what is important in the lives of gifted children and those who live and work with them. Share your views and opinions, your successes and frustrations, your expertise and your dreams. We'll publish them in *your* new column!

Please include your name and address; if your correspondence is published we will mention your name and state or country, unless you specify otherwise. Address your letter, e-mail or FAX to: Open Space Communications, Inc.
FAX (303) 545-6505
e-mail 71552,1425@compuserv.com

Upside Down

Continued from page 1

with analytic skills and rejecting those with visual or holistic skills." But he expects that this pattern is about to change: "I have claimed that with the rise of scientific visualization as a new mode of scientific discovery, a new class of minds will arise as scientists."

Word Bound

Regardless of how rich and well developed it may have been, others have long recognized the limitations of a word-bound culture. Among these is, surprisingly, the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who asserted that "we should talk less and draw more." He personally wanted to "renounce speech altogether and, like organic nature, communicate everything" he had to say "in sketches." Strange words indeed, coming from a poet, a master of words, whom German speakers (and many English ones as well) consider to be on a level with Shakespeare. But such surprises can jar us into seeing seemingly ordinary things in new ways.

Goethe's unexpected words are quoted in an essay by Stephen Jay Gould (1993), who observes: "Primates are visual animals. No other group of mammals relies so strongly on sight. Our attraction to images as a source of understanding is both primal and pervasive. Writing, with its linear sequencing of ideas, is a historical afterthought in the history of human cognition. Yet traditional scholarship has lost this root to our past. Most research is reported by text alone, particularly in the humanities and social

(Continued on page 8)

Learning To Learn

Parents as Home Consultants

Part II

Skill to do comes of doing.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

These suggestions will help you guide your student toward more independent learning. After all, isn't that the real role of a consultant?

Be a Consultant for Study Time/Homework

1. Provide the right environment for study time. Answer the phone, take messages, then encourage your child to return calls during study break. (Refer to *Understanding Our Gifted* March/April 1995, "Learning to Learn," p. 7-8.)

2. Set specific limits on your availability and involvement level during your child's study time. Your role as consultant does not mean that you do the work. Many gifted students are so accustomed to rapidly learning and applying information that they are easily frustrated when something requires more persistence. Help them develop thinking processes to solve their own problems and increase their success by encouraging them to consider:

A. What they already know about the topic or subject.

B. Why this information is important to learn and how it can be used in the future.

C. How they have tried to learn this already and showing how; what needs to be changed in order to learn this.

D. How the material can be divided into smaller units for easier learning; how the material can be divided into some main topic areas, linking the details to each topic; how to look at the material as a whole.

E. Their own systems or strategies for learning this material.

3. Always ask them to first teach you what they already know about the subject instead of trying to reteach the material to them. This allows you to understand their thinking processes and save time by specifically pinpointing the problem area. Don't spend time discussing information they already know.

4. Don't be intimidated when helping your child with material you don't know. For most of us who are parents of the gifted, it's only a matter of time until our children pass us up in one or more areas. Use the steps in #2 above and include the following questions/suggestions when appropriate (usually when *you* don't have a clue!):

A. What did you do in class today that relates to this problem, question, assignment? Explain it to me.

B. Read to the first punctuation mark then rephrase it in your own words. Read to the next punctuation mark, rephrase it, then combine it with the previous information. Continue in this manner to the end of the sentence, problem, paragraph.

C. Draw a diagram, chart, etc. and explain it.

D. Explain vocabulary and how you are using it in your thinking process.

E. Are you using all the right materials for this assignment? Have you copied/read the problem correctly? Where else can you look or what other references are available?

F. What would the teacher say, do or ask?

G. Are you using all your senses to understand/learn this? (Hear It, See It, Say It, Write It, Do It — all at once)

5. Promote higher level thinking when quizzing your child on materials by asking if he/she:

A. Can briefly summarize what has just been read, tell what/who was important and why.

B. Can explain an answer.

C. Can state examples and tell why they are important.

D. Agrees, explaining why or why not.

E. Can explain how he/she arrived at the answer or solution, as well as the "thinking" steps.

F. Can give facts supporting that view and think of others not stated.

G. Can apply these ideas to other situations or information.

H. Can add, compare, contrast information to this subject with what is already known.

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Gloria Frender, an educational consultant from Colorado, has taught elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary and is the mother of two gifted children. She is the author of ***Learning to Learn*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success.***

Upside Down

Continued from page 6

sciences. Pictures, if included at all, are poorly reproduced, gathered in a center section divorced from relevant text, and treated as little more than decoration."

Howard Gardner (1983), who argues for multiple forms of intelligence, distinguishes a special status for visual-spatial in contrast to verbal intelligence. "In the view of many, spatial intelligence is the 'other intelligence'— the one that should be arrayed against, and be considered equal in importance to, 'linguistic intelligence.' . . . For most of the tasks used by experimental psychologists, linguistic and spatial intelligences provide the principle sources of storage and solution" (p. 177).

Given these observations, it is remarkable to see how many very well educated people can be totally unaware of the one-sidedness of their views, arguing, for example, that it is impossible to think without words. Of course, those who make such statements often work in heavily word-bound occupations such as journalism, law and the humanities. In some of these groups there is extraordinary agreement in this regard and such observations may go largely unchallenged — until the word-bound begin talking to engineers, surgeons, designers, sculptors, scientists and mathematicians, those in occupations in which some degree of visualization cannot be avoided. Of course, it is never simple. Some of the finest writers, William Butler Yeats and Winston Churchill among them, frequently drew much of their power not through words alone, but through their abilities to use words in evoking images, emotions, sounds and rhythms.

Data Visualization

For more than a decade, scientists have been using powerful computer graphic technologies to develop and implement visual interpretation of the natural world. Called "scientific visualization," data from supercomputers is used to produce complex moving diagrams to make visible the unseen. In a developing thunderstorm, for instance, the many faceted interactions of temperature, pressure, wind speed and direction are depicted visually, along with shimmering surfaces, eddys and swirls tracked with colored streamers, floating balls and twisting arrows.

Similar techniques have been used to show the intricate workings of the nervous and immune systems. Astronomers walk through their star systems, seeing relationships never perceived before. Twelve hours of lectures about detecting planets around pulsars have been compressed into a three and one-half minute video. Computer graphics and visualization conferences have become a buzz of interdisciplinary appropriation and creative excitement. Experienced scientists admit that they now really understand concepts and processes that they only thought they understood before (Herr & Rosebush, 1992).

These same technologies and techniques are finally finding their way into the world of business, trade and finance as well, with evidence that mainstream business users are just now beginning to take visualization techniques seriously on a larger scale. Several months ago an issue of the *Economist* (Aug.,1995) carried an article about the emergence of visualization in the private business sector as well as in financial and trading data. The article noted the increased capacity of the New York Stock Exchange to handle complex information visually and quoted them as saying: "We're drowning in lots of data and we need ways of making sense of it." Interestingly, the article also suggests that the use of such software could have saved Barings Bank, the British bank that collapsed early in 1995 because of the actions of a rogue trader in Singapore. Spotting such a trader "is often a matter of luck rather than judgement," it stated; however, "with a 3-D view of what traders are doing, strange strategies or dangerous positions jump right out of the picture" (p. 71).

A Second Revolution

Of course, we cannot be certain where or how far all this will lead. Attuned to the old ways as we are, it is almost impossible for many of us to fully appreciate the magnitude of the coming changes — and their accelerating rapidity. Increasingly though, it seems clear that something very important is happening.

At one end, powerful machines are gradually taking away lower level clerical tasks historically considered human work. At the same time, though, these machines create novel tools and new modes of work. Then, through the use of visual talents, words, numbers and crude sketches can be replaced in developing, analyzing and communicating ideas in more precise and useful ways.

With these major technological changes, we expect to see corresponding changes in the kinds of

(Continued on next page)

Upside Down

Continued from page 8

talents that are considered valuable, with crossovers between fields that would have been unthinkable a short time ago. Thus, we might speculate with increasing confidence: "perhaps in the future we will see the solution of difficult problems in statistics, molecular biology, materials development or higher mathematics coming from people who are graphic artists, sculptors, craftsmen, film makers, or designers of animated computer graphics. Different kinds of problems and different kinds of tools may require different talents and favor different kinds of brains" (West, 1991, p. 8).

What does all this mean to and for our brightest children, particularly those with visual and spatial gifts? How best do we prepare them for both a world of rapid technological change and an educational system which is still dominated at all levels by a culture of words? Like an early production line, the system of education is so interlinked that it is difficult to imagine changing any one part without changing all of it; it is unlikely that a sudden metamorphosis will occur. Perhaps, as with many things, looking away from the narrow focus of the specific question to its larger context will prove helpful.

Coming Full Circle

Concepts of giftedness depend in large part on the social, economic and technological context. Long, long ago the visual-spatial talents of the hunter — the ability to read subtle patterns in nature without books and signposts — determined the survival of the individual, village, clan and tribe. Indeed, it is argued that these were the conditions that molded the structure and capacity of the human brain over many thousands of years.

In comparatively recent times, verbal talents — the ability to thrive in a world of reading and lectures, books and papers, argument and debate — have come to be seen generally as the most highly valued of all talents, giving access to rewarding professional work with corresponding prestige, income, stability and power.

Yet, in the near future, if our speculations are correct, we may expect to come full circle, and visual-spatial talents will move to the fore once again. But this time, these talents will be used at a much higher level than was usual in the past. They will be employed to understand subtle patterns in complex systems, whether in business, politics, technology or science, and make the difference between the survival or collapse of companies, parties, communication systems or scientific reputations.

There is no doubt that words will always be important. But the real work and deep understanding (the competitive advantage) will come from a world behind words, a world underneath and beyond them. Many who had trouble with the old word-based world can be expected to prosper in the new system of rich and complex images, and the surprising links between giftedness and various learning disabilities (Benbow, 1986) may become widely known and better understood. After centuries, the fundamental game will have changed once more, and everyone, more or less, sooner or later, will be obliged to learn to play by a new set of rules.

Not out of simple fairness, but out of a wise recognition of the complementary value and interdependence of the two very different ways of seeing the world, we can hope that there will be a better balance this time around, giving proper attention and weight to both the analytic and visual.

The analytic, left-hemisphere approach has been very successful with problems amenable to simplification — the basis, really, of the success of Western science over several centuries. However, we are coming to realize that there is another whole class of complex, large-system problems that cannot be split into pieces and simplified in this traditional way. Some things must be considered all together and at the same time, with all parts simultaneously represented; what is important is the continuous interaction of all parts with each other and with the whole. These kinds of inherently complex systems — meteorological, ecological, social, economic — seem resistant to analysis in the old way. Perhaps not coincidentally, it happens that simultaneous consideration of all aspects of a complex system seems to be the distinctive visual-spatial mode of operation.

Sometimes it is difficult to see how the simultaneous can relate to the sequential. We may find some help in a surprising place. In one of his letters, Mozart explained that to hear a whole symphony all together at the same time was something of unimaginable beauty, and for most of us, too, this is quite literally true. But the question is, how was the magnificent whole created? Mozart explains that he often saw

(Continued on next page)

Upside Down

Continued from page 9

the music like a picture or a painting, when he could look at the whole, then one part, then another section, then the whole again — all together, as a whole, at the same time.

So, in what might appear to be inappropriate or even seemingly impossible ways, Mozart may be showing us how, by shifting modes of thought, we can begin to use visual-spatial approaches as techniques in beginning to understand complex systems that must be viewed as integrated and interactive wholes. Such a procedure would be very new. For most of us, it would be entirely different from what we have been trained to do; for some, the procedure might begin to make sense of what we have often called intuition. But perhaps in this we can see how very powerful these new tools and techniques may prove to be as they reveal to us less-familiar parts of our brains and help us to return to thinking in pictures.

Einstein's Deficiencies

In the life of Albert Einstein, the importance of visual and spatial talents has long been recognized, along with his difficulties with words. Trying to understand the nature of Einstein's genius, the physicist and science historian Gerald Holton observed: ". . .an apparent defect in a particular person may merely indicate an imbalance of our normal expectations. A noted deficiency should alert us to look for a proficiency of a different kind in the exceptional person. The late use of language in childhood, the difficulty in learning foreign languages. . . may indicate a polarization or displacement in some of the skill from the verbal to another area That other, enhanced area is without a doubt, in Einstein's case, an extraordinary kind of visual imagery that penetrates his very thought processes" (in West, 1991, p. 40).

In his own writing, Einstein made clear references to what he saw as two very different modes of thought, especially with regard to his own most creative and productive work. He pointed out that when he did truly productive thinking, he always used "more or less clear images" and what he called "combinatory play," as the "essential feature" in his "productive thought." But he explained that if he wanted to communicate these thoughts to others, he had to go through a difficult and laborious secondary translation process, proceeding from moving images to words and numbers that could be understood by others (West, p. 179).

It is anticipated that modern visualization technologies and techniques may eventually permit many less gifted people to do what Einstein did with mental models in his mind's eye and permit the communication of sophisticated visual ideas without having to resort to poorly-suited verbal and mathematical substitutes.

The power of the visual approach is underscored by changes in Einstein's method of work in later life. In the latter part of his career, Einstein did become increasingly sophisticated in higher mathematics; however, some have argued that this increased sophistication may have been more hindrance than help in his creative work. Abraham Pais, the author of a scientific biography of Einstein, suggests that this change in approach may have contributed to his comparatively reduced productivity in his later years (West, p.197).

In One All-embracing Regard

As we have said, with the enormous speed of technological change, there is growing evidence that many of the talents and skills required in the near future might prove to be quite different from those that were considered highly valuable a short time ago. Accordingly, the visual-spatial talents that have long been seen as specialized or somewhat irrelevant to high-value verbal talents may come to center stage once again. The idea or qualitative value of giftedness, then, depends very much on whether one's talents happen to correspond to the needs of one's society at a particular place and time in history.

Knowing how to proceed in such an upside-down environment is not easy. But it does seem clear that both children and adults who have visual-spatial gifts, in whatever form, need to be actively engaged in educating and reeducating themselves (jumping in with both feet wherever possible), with the full knowledge that most of the conventional education system will be of little or no help. With a few notable exceptions, educators will be the last to know, especially when the technologies and techniques cross the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Even those who do understand what is going on will find themselves relatively powerless to respond, since their career path and all their resources will continue to be controlled by old ways and structures.

(Continued on next page)

Upside Down

Continued from page 10

It seems clear, though, that the new ways will develop rapidly and will be broadly applicable in many areas. Some time ago, Winston Churchill indicated his awareness of the power and broad applicability of visual forms of thought. In a remarkable passage, he illustrated this deep understanding of right-hemisphere modes of thought. Making a novel comparison between painting and military strategy, he put forth a most striking and provocative observation: In considering the painter's skill and "mental power," Churchill observed that "we think that the same mind's eye that can justly survey and appraise and prescribe beforehand the values of a truly great picture in one all-embracing regard, in one flash of simultaneous and homogeneous comprehension, would also . . . be able to pronounce with sureness upon any other high activity of the human intellect" (West, p. 165).

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Parts of this article have appeared in different form in ***In the Mind's Eye*** *and other publications and presentations by the author.*

Thomas G. West, a writer and consultant based in Washington, D.C., has recently established the Visualization Research Institute. His book ***In the Mind's Eye*** is in its sixth printing in English and has been printed twice in Japanese as ***Geniuses Who Hated School.***

New Perspective

Continued from page 1

responsible for what Healy calls the "Rising Tide of Disability" in this nation. Experts estimate that up to 80% of American children could be diagnosed as "learning disabled" by one or more of the methods used in the current quagmire of assessment options. Currently in the United States, anywhere from one and a half to four and a half million schoolchildren, mainly boys, bear the official diagnosis of ADHD (Healy, 1987).

Like many educators, reformers, scholars and theoreticians, we question the premise that so many children are broken. Our belief is that school is broken.

WHAT CHILDREN EXPERIENCE

The overwhelming majority of children we see are "of a kind," differing from each other mainly in the intensity with which certain characteristics are experienced. To varying degrees these children seem to experience heightened sensitivity to physical stimuli, particularly sound, light, and touch. The type of school problems experienced are also of a kind, varying mainly in intensity.

In an effort to begin to validate our intuitive sense of this phenomenon we began interviewing our children, asking questions specifically related to sensory experience, hemispheric preference and the internal thought process of each one. Here is what the children describe to us.

Mental Process

Most tell us they think primarily in pictures — either still like photographs or moving like videos. Some report a complete absence of sound or self-talk; others experience some self-talk. Sometimes the pictures are quite abstract, patterns and images rather than realistic. The thought process is not sequential. Images occur in random montage or stream of consciousness punctuated by moments of sudden and complete insight.

Temple Grandin presents a comprehensive description and discussion of this learning/processing style. Grandin is a "recovered autistic" who received her PhD in 1988. The similarities between her description of her learning/processing style, as well as her experiences of sensory overload and the information we have obtained from children are extraordinary! It certainly validates for us the need to see the characteristics of these variously labeled children on a single continuum

(Continued on next page)

New Perspective

Continued from page 11

differentiated mainly by intensity.

Sound

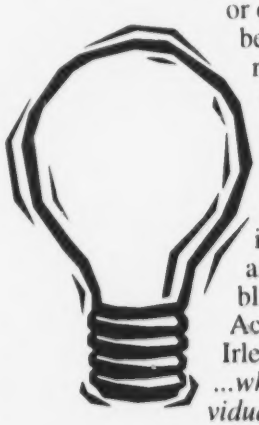
These children hear the grass grow. We have found students who can tell what word is being written by listening to the sound of the pen on the paper. Others can repeat a sentence whispered out of sight 30 feet away. They hear their parents' private conversations and everything else that goes on. The sound of a faulty florescent light buzzing seems to be as loud as a fire alarm. It is very difficult for many of these children to differentiate foreground and background sound. They are like dogs who can hear the silent whistle.

The overwhelming majority of the children we have worked with seem to have auditory/sequential processing problems (some formally identified, some not). They cannot accurately process much of the information (directions or content) received through the auditory channel. To become successful schoolhouse learners, these children need strategies to help them convert the written and spoken word into a visual framework.

Educators must begin to understand and accept that non-sequential, non-verbal, intuitive learning is a natural and legitimate learning style and not necessarily an abnormality to be fixed. We need to add to our craft knowledge a wide range of instructional strategies which build upon the incredible strengths these children have in the areas of visualization, problem solving, synthesis and intuitive understanding of subject matter.

Light

Many of the children report that they are experiencing most or all of the symptoms of Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome (SSS) as described by Helen Irlen (1991). A perceptual problem, this syndrome is characterized by extreme sensitivity to "glare, brightness, and certain lighting conditions" (p. 32). Reading under fluorescent lights can be very uncomfortable and frustrating for affected individuals. Some of the behaviors associated with SSS are seen when the children read: a tendency to skip words or lines, lose the place, become fatigued or distracted, become restless, active or fidgety, get headaches, experience watery or itchy eyes and lots of blinking. According to Irlen:



...when individuals with SSS read under fluorescent lighting, they might experience dizziness and a sense of agitation or restlessness that could result in headaches, even migraines. They usually prefer to read under dim, indirect or natural light. They might try to shade the reading material from overhead lights. Light-sensitive individuals under any type of lighting conditions might experience fatigue, which reduces the amount of energy available for visually intensive tasks such as reading.

(Irlen, p.32)

We have worked with numerous students who tell us that they can see waves of light traveling down a fluorescent tube! No wonder they are "distractible" when reading and copying for extended periods of time under the fluorescent lights in our classrooms!

Touch

Of all the areas discussed this is the one children and parents laugh about the most. We ask if the child has ever torn the labels off a shirt; they all have. They can feel everything that touches them, so sheets can't have pills and clothes must be loose; mosquitoes are doomed. For these kids, squirming and wiggling are constant both waking and sleeping. Physical discomfort may be experienced more fully, whether from an ordinary head cold, a dental procedure or sore muscles. These children do not seem to be hypochondriacs — they really do feel more.

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

No wonder these children have problems in school! We agree with Susan Baum (1991) who states "the school environment is very clear about its demands: students should be docile, neat, quiet for extended periods, and interested in what the teacher is interested in" (p. 27). We cannot imagine an environment less conducive to success for our children. Not only is the sensory overload painful and distracting, but the left-brained auditory sequential nature of school is fundamentally incompatible with the right-brained processing so natural to these children. School demands are also very different from those of a sensory-overloaded culture which, according to Priscilla Vail (1987),

...reinforces dependency on pictures and music as accompani-

(Continued on next page)

New Perspective

Continued from page 12

ments to words while promoting the habit of non-listening. The high level of environmental noise (jackhammers and horns in cities, or other students' stereos in college dorms) means that survival lies in tuning out or at least turning down. So students learn to watch-listen to television and films, thump-listen to music, or tune out completely.
(Vail, p.100)

We need to work to bring everyday culture and the requirements and expectations of the schoolhouse into some sort of alignment for these children. Until we do, they will continue to be caught in the middle of conflicting adult value systems.

As stated earlier, the children in our practice are "of a kind," and the school problems they experience tend also to be "of a kind." We agree with Vail when she reminds us that "learning differences are lifelong, and although they may create embarrassment and failure during school years ... they may cease to matter after graduation. They are what they are called: school problems" (p. 9).

The organizational framework of most schools reflects a bias toward linear, sequential structures. Subjects, artificially divided into neat little compartments, change every hour or so forcing many right-brained children to regroup too often. Curriculum, when it exists at all, is often delivered in "unrelated" pieces, not only across disciplines but within them as well. Little effort is made to connect or synthesize various strands of learning so that children can see the "big picture." Skills are taught and tested in isolation with little sense of "why I need to know this" or, for that matter, why they even need to be taught. Many classrooms are still dominated by verbal sequential approaches. Others, in the name of creativity, lack any structure or curriculum at all. These structures, divisions and ambiguities make no sense to holistic right-brained learners.

The stress experienced by forced confinement in a sensory-overloaded, organizationally painful and occasionally hostile setting for seven hours a day can be overwhelming. Children cope with the stress in a number of ways:

- Some tune out.
- Some act out.
- Some learn to endure "in quiet desperation."
- Some manage to excel anyway.

Social and emotional implications are multifaceted. Self esteem is usually damaged but some children are able to separate their school selves from their real selves. Often they experience great success in special enrichment programs, the arts, sports or other "non-school" activities. Other children, especially those who are highly perfectionistic, do not experience success and may even internalize a "victim mentality," feelings of helplessness, depression and worse.

SOME TECHNIQUES THAT WORK

It is not within the scope of this article to propose changes in the system we call school, although ultimately that is exactly what must happen to counter the rising tide of disability. What we can share are some simple guidelines which we know work.

No examination of the "school problems" experienced by many visual-spatial learners would be complete without some discussion of "basic academic skills." For many of these students acquiring basic skills is a problem. We know that visual-spatial learners hate rote memorization and an excess of drill and practice. Mistakenly, many of us translate that to mean they don't need structure. School settings become noisy and disorganized and the "curriculum" may be so loose as to hardly exist, and nothing could be worse for a visual-spatial child. Let's dispel some myths here.

Myth I
Visual-spatial learners don't need basic skills. Compensation techniques can be used instead.

Reality
Visual-spatial students need relevant basic skills taught in the holistic right-brained ways discussed by Jeffrey Freed in this issue. It is precisely because teaching methods often match poorly with this type of learner that basic skills acquisition has become so difficult. Unless there is a specific learning disability, visual-spatial students should be expected to acquire all of the basic academic skills.

Myth II
Visual-spatial learners are naturally creative, therefore they need a totally open, investigative classroom. Basic skills will be acquired as the student sees the need to acquire them (whole picture).

Reality
Visual-spatial students need direct instruction to acquire basic skills. They will not learn spelling by using "inventive spelling." They

(Continued on next page)

New Perspective

Continued from page 13

will input incorrect spelling in their photographic memories, and it will be this wrong spelling that will be accessed from long term memory. They will never understand the structure of the English language through "transformational grammar;" they must be shown the structure of the language. Even the most talented dancer will fail to become a classical ballerina unless specifically shown the basic positions. Creativity cannot be practiced in a vacuum.

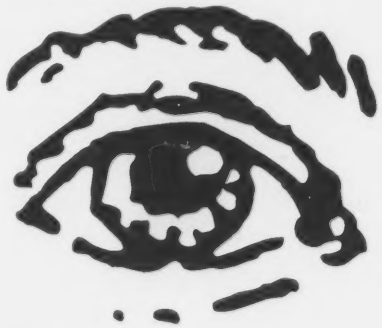
Myth III
Visual-spatial learners feel oppressed by classroom structure.

Reality
Visual-spatial learners crave a structured classroom. It is important to understand that environmental over-stimulation (especially noise) can interfere with learning through sensory overload. My experience in the regular classroom with gifted visual-spatial learners has convinced me that the oppression felt by many of them has to do with rigid limits set, not on the environment, but on the intellect. *The freedom these learners crave is not physical, it is intellectual.* Open-ended intellectual discovery balanced with skills acquisition in a fairly well structured setting seems to work very well.

Myth IV
Creativity just happens.

Reality
We need to create a learning situation which fosters and, in a sense, induces creativity. In order to be creative the basic needs of students are similar to the needs of artists, athletes and musicians. Creativity demands practical performance, observation of the performance of others, skills training, forward momentum in ever-increasing challenge levels, critical evaluation based on performance standards and a great coach.

Myth V
Just give them a computer.



Reality
Time after time we hear that the use of technology does not improve production for these students. Such statements are made by those who believe that providing a computer and a keyboarding class should do the trick.

A student who has no idea how to write a formal essay will not magically figure it out by looking at a screen. Once again, direct instruction in the tools of the task must take place. In addition, that keyboarding class taps into exactly the motoric weakness the technology is supposed to eliminate. Most visual-spatial learners will never type, instead developing their own system of hunt-and-peck.

The use of technology as a work tool really is a big part of the answer for our students, but there is a period of frustration that must be worked through as youngsters practice the use of the tool for real work. Experience with technology is the best teacher of its usefulness. Help students learn to use the computer for short fill-in-the-blank or short-answer assignments. They don't need to copy the worksheet, they can simply number the answers appropriately and staple the answer sheet to the worksheet. This is an easy and non-overwhelming way to get started. The computer is used to get real work done. Visual-spatial learners who have access to a computer should be doing 75 to 80% of their written work on the computer by the time they are in 8th or 9th grade.

THE NEED FOR A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT
Finally, how can we tell what's really going on with a student? How can we separate out the overlapping characteristics of visual-spatial learners? What's needed is a multidisciplinary assessment.

All of the sensory tendencies we've discussed, as well as the overlapping characteristics of ADD, giftedness and right-brained processing, need to be conceptualized as continuous. Students who are on the extreme ends of this continuum will experience a greater degree of schoolhouse frustration than those who may have the same characteristics to a more moderate degree. Such students should be assessed in a holistic way, both educationally and medically, by qualified professionals who freely share results and impressions with one another.

1. *Psychoeducational testing consisting of a WISC III and a WJ-R, both cognitive and abstract batteries including basic reading skills...* This particular combina-

(Continued on next page)

Characteristics of Giftedness

- Rapid Grasp of Concepts
- Awareness of Patterns - Thinking by Analogy
- High Energy - Physical, Intellectual, Psychological
- Curiosity - Psychological Hunger & Thirst
- Concentration
- Exceptional Memory -Powerful Experimental Memory; Weak for Specific Factual Information
- Empathy
- Vulnerability - Socially & Emotionally
- Heightened Perceptions - Physical & Emotional
- Divergent Thinking - High Tolerance for Ambiguity

(Vail, 1987, p.2)

Right Mode Characteristics

- Responds to Novelty
- Works with Wholes Not Parts
- Is Visual, Not Auditory
- Is Associated with Intuition & Ability to "Size Up" Situations
- In Music, Picks Up the Melody & Disregards the Lyrics
- Is Specialized forUnderstanding the Relative Position of Objects in Space & Mentally Turning Around Three Dimensional Figures (Many Video Games Use These Abilities)
- In Language Processing Is Well Adapted for:
  - Understanding General Meaning & Some Aspects of Word Meaning
  - Getting the "Gist" of the Speaker's Intent
  - Picking Up the Contours & Melodic Pattern of Spoken Language
  - Gesturing and "Body Language"
  - Thinking Metaphorically

(Vail, 1987, p.125)

ADD Behavior Checklist

- Failure to Finish Things He or She Starts
- Failure to Listen
- Difficulty Concentrating or Sticking to an Activity
- Acting Before Thinking
- Shifting Between One Activity and Another
- Difficulty in Organization
- Calling Out in Class / Difficulty Awaiting Turn
- Excessive Physical Activity

(Healy, 1990, p. 138)

Figure 1. Typical Lists of Characteristics

(Continued on next page)

New Perspective

Continued from page 15

tion of tests will bring forth any motor processing, auditory short term memory or auditory (phonetic language development) proces-sing issues. Receptive and expressive language disability can be detected and attentional issues can be addressed. Appropriate services can be suggested.

2. *Complete medical evaluation for students who have possible attentional issues...* Physicians need to be aware of overlapping characteristics of gifted, ADD and right-brained processing. A thorough medical evaluation includes a thyroid panel and an EKG. Conservative use of medication can be miraculous for the right child.

3. *A complete vision exam by an ophthalmologist trained in visual motor integration to get to the root of certain visual motor integration problems...* Vision therapy can be very helpful, if needed.

All students do not need all of these steps, of course. The place to start is with a good educational assessment.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Imagine a learning environment designed to capitalize on our children's natural strengths instead of one which attempts to recreate the same learner over and over. Excessive use of labels, misinformed attempts at remediation and rigid belief in the myth that there is a best way to learn constitute a very real tragedy in our schools. The cost to children and our society is immeasurable.

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Teaching Right

Continued from page 3

new ideas and has gone from being a social recluse to a social butterfly. While they know that Evan will always face new academic challenges because of his learning style, his parents and teachers are amazed at his 180-degree turnaround.

Over the last decade, I've tutored hundreds of students like Evan and have achieved this dramatic level of success with virtually all of them, especially if I also have the support of their parents and teachers. It's common for these children, who are prone to letter and number inversions and reversals, to lag behind in reading, writing and computational math, leaving their parents to puzzle over the gap between their children's supposed intelligence and an almost uncanny ability to do puzzles, mazes and drawings. I've come to the conclusion that these visual-spatial gifted students have tremendous strengths which more than compensate for their weaknesses. The good news in this is that they can be very successful in academics, if only we identify them early and nurture their talents.

THE LEFT-RIGHT BRAIN CONTINUUM

My conclusion is that human beings learn on a continuum which stretches from left to right and represents hemisphericity. At one pole the individuals are extremely left-brained, sequential and think almost entirely in words. They visualize poorly, must write down information they want to remember and are deductive reasoners who solve problems primarily by step-by-step inferential logic.

The right-brained person's processing is non-linear and illogical but often possesses great truth. Because one of the attributes of right-brained people is a non-sequential, divergent form of thinking, their minds often veer into unusual and different territory. This can result in illogical or often unsubstantiated conclusions. On the other hand, they may view a problem from an entirely different angle, leading to new breakthroughs and discoveries.

(Continued on next page)

Teaching Right

Continued from page 16

As we move to the extreme right end of this continuum, we find individuals who think completely in pictures which are unusually rich, three-dimensional, photographic-like images. It's well documented that many extraordinary thinkers and achievers, among them Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Winston Churchill, and most recently Temple Grandin, think visually, creatively and divergently. While creative and highly intelligent, these individuals face(d) the challenge of "translation," the enormously difficult task of putting images into words. Perhaps one of my profoundly right-brained students summed it up most aptly when, studying an impressionistic picture, she said to me, "Tell me what that picture says...put it into words." Of course I couldn't, and she replied, "That's what it's like inside of my head all the time."

SPELLING

I'm working with Lydia, a gifted teenager, who was referred to me because of a spelling deficit so severe that a word processor's spell-check program was no help to her. Throughout her academic career, teachers repeated that it's important to spell according to the way one hears words. Lydia tried this, and that is precisely her problem: she spells what she hears. She's one of many children who cannot distinguish vowel sounds and therefore can't spell auditorily. Attempts to sound out words and "hear" the way they're spelled are met with failure.

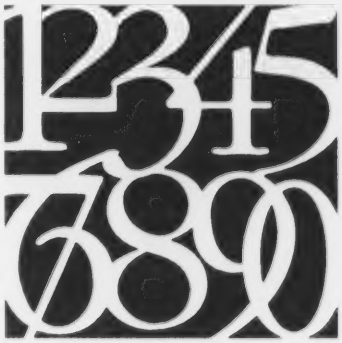
Like Lydia, most of these right-brained students have great visual memories and are prone to reversals so that when they misspell a word, it imprints negatively in their heads. Then, when faced with the ordeal of having to spell the word quickly on a test, invariably the misspelled version will result.

Right-brained individuals differ from their left-brained counterparts primarily in two ways: they are divergent thinkers and can hold images longer. Such ability to take an image and hold it, then recite or write from the image is exclusive to them. People who think in images can spell visually and remember whole words, especially if they are taught that this is acceptable. These individuals *must* learn to spell through visualization, something they do innately well.

It's also been my experience that if you take this latent visual ability and work with it, encourage and nurture it, there are almost no limits to where it can lead. Many of my students who previously couldn't spell anything longer than a five-letter word, routinely spell such words as *existentialism, antidisestablishmentarianism* and *parapseudomicrobrainscanology* — forwards and backwards. This ability to spell backwards as effortlessly as forwards is one way of determining where one fits on my continuum.

The method I use to teach right-brained individuals to spell is simple. In working with students, I use bright markers or crayons to write down a long word on a sheet of white paper, then hold it up at a safe or appropriate distance, and instruct them to image the word and not try to spell it until they can see it in their heads. Integral to visualization is that, as much as possible, they must be in a relaxed and confident state. This creates fertile ground for visualization.

There is nothing so astonishing as demonstrating this ability to parents or teachers who are left-brained and who spell auditorily. They are astounded to see so-called "poor spellers" pull off words like *existentialism* with ease, both forwards and backwards. When Lydia discovered that she could spell beautifully through visualization, she was ecstatic and began to see possibilities of using visualization not only for spelling but for other academic pursuits as well.



MATH

Trenton is a gifted, extremely right-brained high school student who had been staffed as Learning Disabled all through school. Among his many academic weaknesses was a total inability to do computational math. Times tables had been tackled innumerable times with no success, and timed math tests had been a source of continual frustration.

I started working with Trent by taking away the pencil completely and forcing him to do math in his head. I wrote the problems,

(Continued on next page)

Teaching Right

Continued from page 17

which early on consisted of long columns of addition. From experience, I suspected he would be able to do these far better in his head than the average person. After each successful equation, I raved to him about his wonderful ability to hold numbers in his head.

The next step was double- by single-digit multiplication, still without his using a pencil or calculator, which is key to all this "head math." He was instructed to ask me if he needed any information on the times tables. This process continued until Trent was able to accomplish a staggering feat: 6- X 6-digit multiplication in his head with astonishing accuracy.

Computational mathematics is often a weakness of students who, like Trenton, are in the right-brained population. Though many of their gifts are measurable and documented, they struggle heroically through times tables and subtraction, although usually not addition. Division is a nightmare and timed tests are an anathema to them.

Because I do all the writing, the only way students can solve the problems I pose is through visualization or counting on their fingers. Almost immediately this helps. Students are then free from the burden of having to translate their pictures onto paper. I simply instruct them to visualize and to treat the problem as if they were writing it on paper. "Hold the images," I say. Oftentimes this pays off in startling results. Many of my student can do double- by double-digit multiplication far better in their heads than on paper.

My technique for teaching advanced multiplication is an interesting one. Let's say a student is asked to multiply 25 X 14. He could do 25 X 10, by adding a zero to the 25. Next he's asked to multiply 4 X 25: 100, then told to line up the numbers in his head and add them... 350: an easy one for right-brained learners. I find that left-brained students lack the ability to keep the 250 and the 100 in their heads, so that when they attempt to add, the numbers have disappeared. This is all alien and nonproductive to the left-brained population; theirs is the method of drill, memory and repetition. And this is the classic, traditional method used to teach spelling and computational mathematics.

Trenton's success with math was nothing short of a miracle and has led to breakthroughs in other academic arenas. In a year's time it helped change him from a 2.4 GPA-student with strong LD intervention to a 3.8-student with no extra support. His is an unqualified success story, considering he was undoubtedly headed for failure in school, with all of its ramifications.

It's a travesty that most students with a right-hemispheric learning style never know that their weaknesses have corresponding strengths; they go through life thinking they're poor at math and spelling. What is even more distressing is that most are wonderful at understanding geometry and difficult math concepts.

READING

George is a 6 year old, who had been referred to me because he had shown absolutely no ability to decode words. He apparently has no phonetic ability and struggled mightily to sound out words. But because he's a brilliant child, with several subtest scores that place him in the highly gifted range, no one could comprehend what the problem was.

Reading for kids like George should be approached with the understanding that many right-brained individuals cannot read well out loud. For many, the translation time involved in imaging the word, phrasing it and then translating it to a spoken form happens too quickly in a typical classroom situation. Oral reading requires too much speed for these students; words are useful to them only in how they bring forth images.

I approach reading in two distinct fashions. For oral reading, I almost always use my finger or a pointer so as to focus the eye on an individual word. I instruct students to read only the words with which they feel comfortable, to go slowly and to allow me to read any words they might not be able to decipher. George was immediately relieved that he no longer had to attempt to sound things out, which freed him to read and focus on the words he knew. As he has an almost photographic memory, I knew that if I was able to reach him before he made a mistake, I could access this wonderful skill.

Early reading intervention is

(Continued on next page)

Teaching Right

Continued from page 18

important with children like George. If allowed to attempt to sound out a word, the more right-brained individuals will almost always miss it. Then, because of their propensity to reverse things, when faced with that word again they will automatically produce the incorrect first attempt. Oftentimes, students like George will relax when they are freed from the burden of having to look ahead for the long, difficult words (progressions) or to look behind at a possible mistake they might have made previously (regressions). In many cases students miss words they know because their eyes are focused on one of these difficult words. What emerges from their mouths is often a hybrid of the simple and the complex words all jumbled together.

New words are committed almost entirely to sight. After an appropriate interval I reinforce the new words. Fluidity and rhythm in reading for short periods of time can then be attained, and students usually find this immensely gratifying. In George's case, after he discovered that he could read, he became confident, relaxed and, for the first time, excited about reading. In less than four months his reading went from a primer to a 2nd grade reading level.

It's important to note that this is an incredibly intense and difficult process and that it should only be attempted for short stretches of time. Later on, the stamina for longer sessions will develop and successful fluent oral reading will become more of a reality.

Teaching silent reading requires a different strategy. Because of gifted children's often exceptional ability to process reading material at a very fast rate, with this method the emphasis is on speed and the ability of words to create images. I usually have students quickly scan the material and ask if the words conjure up or bring forth any images in their minds. If the answer is no, I inform them that they are not yet reading. "Reading is about comprehension and comprehension is about visualization," I tell them. Sometimes I begin by reading and direct them to sit back, relax and visualize my words. Later I give them a book for short periods of time, asking at appropriate intervals if they're getting an image from the words. When I discover that they're successfully imaging, I reward them with comments such as, "Now you're reading!" or "That's what reading really is!" My experience has taught me that there's a relationship between how poorly a person reads out loud and his/her latent ability to become an accurate speed reader. I suggest that only right-brained individuals will ever become great speed readers, as speed reading is about the person's ability to make images from the words and not their phonetic translation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It's clear to me that by dwelling on "what's wrong with them," our education system is failing gifted, right brained students. Rather than working with strengths intrinsic to the brain's right hemisphere and looking for innovative methods to produce positive results, we key in on and try to remediate weaknesses. What is unquestionably true is that rote learning, drill and traditional teaching methods are extremely ineffective in dealing with these students. What they need is a hands-on, imaginative, **visual** approach to teaching. But in the classroom, their teachers are more likely to be left-brained and sequential, which means the method of teaching is auditory and sequential. Their minds, divergent anyway, wander easily as they aren't much attracted to the material because of its dry, lock-step method of presentation. To these already largely disengaged students, is added the difficulty of being surrounded by competing multiple distractions. Because their attention is drawn in so many directions, they can't visualize and almost no learning takes place. West (1991) speaks of the double-bind of having this strong right brain: "an imagination that is so powerful and so rich that it can produce the most original and profound conceptions...but which may be so enticing (especially in youth) that it is extremely difficult for the affected person to focus on an assigned task or on tumbling symbols on a lifeless page." This all-too-common scenario can render the right-brained individual totally foolish in many classroom situations, particularly lectures. What will help these students are open-minded fair teachers who respect the differences of gifted, visual-spatial, right-brained learners, as well as parents who will work as their children's advocates.

Teaching methods need not

(Continued on page 21)

Creative Ventures

Quilts

Part I

Families and Friends are
like Quilts,
Lives Stitched Together with
Smiles and Tears,
Colored by Memories and
Bordered by Love.

Anonymous

Quilts make good metaphors. The sight or mention of colorful, hand-stitched pieced-together fabric creations almost instantly brings forth images of grandmothers, pioneers, the warmth and solid traditions of early American homes and simple yet fundamental life pleasures. A universally shared art form, few artifacts possess as many rich layers of meaning and symbolism as the quilt. For the Amish, African Americans, and Native Hawaiians here in America, along with almost every other ethnic group be it originally from Russia, Sweden or China, the quilt and quilt motifs are symbols rich in traditional meaning, as well as models of creativity and learning for children.

On this voyage we'll examine books for children which employ quilts as their subject or design. The exploration will continue on future expeditions as we examine additional books and investigate creative activities for children based on quilting and quilt themes.

One of the foremost thematic symbols of the quilt is family continuity across generations. Quilts provide windows to the past, at the same time offering tangible reminders of ancestors no longer living. Children come to know the value of family traditions and heirlooms given with love from one generation to another. Great-grandmother is no longer here but she lives on through her treasured quilts.

Patricia Polacco's *The Keeping Quilt* (1988, New York: Simon & Schuster) is a splendid multi-generational story of her own family as creators and keepers of one beloved quilt. Her great-grandmother Anna was an immigrant who came to New York City in the early years of this century, finding there a hurried world, much different from her rural Russia. From Anna's clothes and those of her family members, her mother sewed a beautiful quilt, and generation after generation it was used on both joyous and solemn occasions. The quilt became a tablecloth for Sabbath meal, a bedspread for a picnic, a wedding huppa (tent) for marriages, a blanket to welcome and warm new babies, and finally a comforter to keep the elderly Anna contented in her bed for her last moments on earth. The author-illustrator informs readers at the book's end that she too still uses the quilt for many occasions and will pass it on to her own daughter. In another of her books, Polacco also uses quilts as a backdrop. Her delightful *Just Plain Fancy* (1990, New York: Bantam Books) is the story of Naomi, a young girl struggling to fully comprehend the meanings of "plain" and "fancy" in her Pennsylvania Amish community.

Other very fine quilt picture books for young readers celebrate intergenerational stories about grandmothers and granddaughters. Valerie Flournoy's *The Patchwork Quilt* (1985, New York: Dial Books) and its sequel, *Tanya's Reunion* (1995, New York: Dial Books) both beautifully illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, have at their core a warm and tender story about an African American grandmother and granddaughter who forge a special bond through the creation of a quilt for Tanya. In *Luka's Quilt*

(Continued on next page)

Quilts

Continued from page 20

(1994, New York: Greenwillow Books) by Georgia Guback, a young Hawaiian girl is excited about receiving a quilt of her own fashioned by her grandmother especially for her. But disappointment and sadness surface when Luka sees the monochromatic finished quilt; she had anticipated a rainbow of colors. The resolution portrays Luka's grandmother as a remarkable, creative problem solver. *The Canada Geese Quilt* (1989, New York: Dell Books) follows similar themes in an easy-to-read chapter book by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock. Ariel and her grandmother work together crafting a quilt for the new baby who will soon join the family. When the grandmother suffers a stoke, Ariel appears helpless to either finish the quilt or help her grandmother overcome her new disabilities and emotional depression. This story's resolution speaks touchingly about life cycles and the solace and joy of family love.

Family, home and traditions are but a few of the themes evoked by quilts; on our next voyage we'll continue on in quest of more.

Jerry Flack is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Teaching Right

Continued from page 19

radically change. Simply, we must be more understanding and make allowances, be willing and able to bend. Give untimed spelling and math tests if necessary. Recognize that oral reading is an inaccurate barometer of how a right-brained student reads and comprehends, and so value silent reading more.

We must respect differences in children, and act on them as positives rather than negatives. Armstrong (1995) illustrates this, suggesting:

Instead of thinking of your child as. . .	*Think of him as...*
hyperactive	*energetic*
impulsive	*spontaneous*
distractible	*creative*
a daydreamer	*imaginative*
inattentive	*global thinker...*
unpredictable	*flexible*
argumentative	*independent*
stubborn	*committed*
irritable	*sensitive*
aggressive	*assertive*

(p. 256)

There is both hope and help for the right-brained, visual-spatial gifted child. Earlier identification and more understanding of these individuals will result in less ostracism and shaming. Society will benefit from their formidable brain power as well, as we better tap into their abilities to see, take on and solve problems in fresh and creative ways.

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LIFE LINES
Scenes from the Lives of Our Gifted

...A handful of both right- and left-brained gifted children.

In the back seat of a car, three 2nd-grade boys were discussing *Indian in the Cupboard*. Two had seen the movie version and the third had read the book. Some plot turn was under dispute, which led to no small amount of disagreement and bickering between the two movie-goers.
Finally, the boy who'd read the book chimed in with a definitive sounding opinion on how it had actually happened.
"How do you know that for sure?" asked one of the other boys.
"Because I read the book last year and I can see the page in my head. I can read it there right now."
—Indian in the Cupboard is by Lynn Reid Banks.

At 5, Ellen's great Halloween haul thrilled her. Like lots of kids, she organized all her candy into piles. But unlike most, she then spent time meticulously listing her inventory of every last candy bar, box of raisins and piece of bubble gum on a giant poster board chart.
—Ellen's Halloween inventories and poster-making continued for years.

As part of some diagnostic testing, Maddie was asked to draw a picture of herself. She worked hard to complete the task and after several minutes turned in a paper that stopped the testers in their tracks. Along the border she'd begun with her two feet and proceeded to line up her body parts all in a tidy row. After her feet came two legs, then a torso, two arms and, beside those, a head.
— Maddie was 3 years old.

After a few times playing "Aaaghh," a game which challenges players to negotiate a marble through 3-dimensional obstacles in order to get Home, J.T. was no longer satisfied. So to make things a little more interesting, he devised a system which assigned difficulty points to each 3-D obstacle, culminating in a final-score award table: under 100 landed you in The Crying Zone; 100-200 in The Low-Five Zone; 200-300, High-Five Zone; and above 300, you got to Yippee!
– J.T. is 4 years old; the basic-version game is from Tomy.

"Bedtime pretty soon," Toby was told.
"I *want* to go to bed!" exclaimed the toddler.
"You do?" Toby's dad asked, amazed. "Why is that?"
"To see the stories in my head when I'm sleeping!"
—Toby was 18 months old.

"Can't I just skip all this school junk and go to college?"
—Asked by a middle-school-aged child.

Compiled and edited by ***Laura Goodman***

Above and Beyond

The Gift of Humor

It's common knowledge that gifted youngsters often "see" the world quite differently from their age peers. They perceive deeper meaning in situations and become more emotionally involved with issues that affect their lives and the world at large. Their intensity often makes it seem as though they should try to "lighten up" to achieve better emotional balance. Because some gifted kids have lightened up to the point of becoming the "class clown," they may find that they don't receive that hoped-for measure of appreciation.

It's easy to spot youngsters with an advanced sense of humor when they understand comments or throw-away lines, puns and jokes adults use to cope with various situations. When we see a student who smiles at jokes or lines with double meanings, ones that should be understandable only to adults, we know that youngster has the gift of humor.

These gifted kids often discover that it's more comfortable to be noticed for being funny than for being highly intelligent. It's easy for them to assume they're liked and appreciated when others laugh at something funny they've said. But sometimes clowning behaviors act as a release for the pressure they feel when they think everyone always expects right answers from them. Laughter can divert attention from perceived inadequacies and inject interest to lessons and discussions which otherwise may not seem so interesting. In some cases, getting laughs allows the clown to draw a share of power and control away from the teacher.

Stop and consider, though, how much creativity is inherent in these clowning behaviors. Some kids creatively juxtapose, embellish and manipulate ideas in wonderful ways, which may seem strange to others. They are able to recognize and appreciate the absurdities others may overlook and are likely to pick up the irony in many situations, often finding nuances of meaning and unexpected connections between new concepts and other things they've learned.

Youngsters who have the gift of humor may well need a little extra guidance. When they think adults will really appreciate their "lines," they may be shocked to discover their remarks are misinterpreted or rejected, and adults must be prepared to help in understanding the importance of timing or context. They may also need help in appreciating the differences between humor and sarcasm or "put downs." Role-play situations are invaluable with kids whose senses of humor may be hurting others. By reversing roles, so that each child plays both persons in a scenario, gifted kids learn to see how their humor can become a positive addition in a situation.

Adults must recognize that the funny things some kids say truly reflect their exceptional abilities as creative thinkers. Let's not forget that some of these youngsters will grow up to bring laughter and joy into the lives of millions of people. Just imagine what it must have been like to have lived with and/or taught Jerry Seinfeld or Gilda Radnor!

Susan Winebrenner, from Illinois, presents workshops on a variety of topics, but her first love is teaching gifted children. She is the author of ***Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.***

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The Bulletin Board

For parents, teachers and non-profit groups...as space permits.

CONFERENCES

February 23, 1996, Beyond Giftedness III, Arvada, Colorado. Keynote presentation: Jeffrey Freed--The Gifted Child as Visual Learner. Contact Open Space Communications, 1-800-494-6178, (303) 444-7020/FAX (303) 545-6505.

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February 21-24, 1996, **Creative Learning - University of Arizona Extended Learning,** Tucson. (520)621-8632, ext.252.

February 22-23, 1996, **Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education,** Little Rock. Cynthia Jackson, (501)882-5467 or 882-3034.

February 22-23, 1996, **Nebraska Association for the Gifted,** Lincoln. Kay Corell, (404)493-2479.

March 1-3, 1996, **California Association for the Gifted,** Los Angeles. (415)965-0653.

March 8-9, 1996, **New Jersey Association for Gifted Children,** Princeton. Albert Dorhout, (201)334-6991.

March 14-16, 1996, **Georgia Association for Gifted Children,** Athens. Pam McNair (706)542-1740.

March 21-23, 1996, **North Carolina Association for the Gifted/Talented,** Winston-Salem. (704)377-2067.

April 20, 1996, **Susan Winebrenner,** "Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom," Arvada, CO. Education Consulting Service, (708)530-1009/ FAX(708)530-8798.

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Common Ground
Parenting & Teaching Gifted Children

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Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

March/April, 1996

Volume 8, Issue 4

Crossing the Line: Parents & Teachers Working Together

Dorothy Knopper

Strange what body language can tell you. At a recent seminar for parents and teachers my first impression was of a cohesive group of adults, chatting, laughing, participating together. But closer observation reminded this observer of a junior high dance, with boys on one side of the gym and girls on the other. There was indeed a distinct distance between the two groups, wide as a basketball court, separating those who live with and those who work with gifted young people.

The separation was evident in how the conference participants identified themselves and sat together in meetings and at lunch, in how they asked questions; I heard it in their discussions as they walked from session to session; and, mostly, it was there in their general demeanor—polite but suspicious and somewhat antagonistic. Parents and teachers were certainly grouped on opposite sides of more than a meeting room. Their combined attitudes suggested serious disharmony.

Much has been written on how parents can and should work

(Continued on page 10)

INSIDE

FOCUS ON:

Common Ground.... *Parenting & Teaching Gifted Children*

Highlight
Double Duty
Interviews from the Field 17

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 4

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 5

Student Essay
Marie Becker 6

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 7

Tactics
Gina Ginsberg Riggs 9

Life Lines 15

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 16

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 19

Enhancing Linguistic Gifts of the Young

Joan Franklin Smutny

Because of their exceptional abilities, the interior lives of gifted children are often more complex and richer, beyond what their more typical peers experience. Reading with and responding to what is read is not just the responsibility of the 1st- or 2nd-grade teacher. It is a job inherent in parenting any child, beginning in infancy and continuing through all the years and experiences that enable a child to grow and deepen in an appreciation of the ability to understand and communicate. For parents of gifted children, as in so many other areas, the responsibilities for responding to reading — talking, evaluating and judging — seem to weigh heavier because of the exceptional nature of those young interior lives. But the task of stimulating a rich use of language and encouraging a love of reading need not be burdensome. The best of help is available: a wealth of excellent reading material, the bright, avid minds of the youngsters themselves and, from Joyce Ury Dumtschin (in Smutny, Veenker & Veenker, 1989), some strategies for answering and extending questions and developing language skills. Applicable in a wide variety of learning settings, these five strategies are:

(Continued on page 12)

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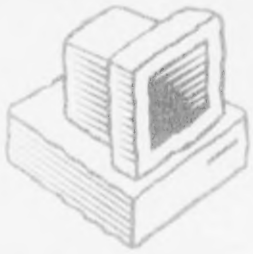
Between the Lines

The preparation of each issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* presents a unique challenge to our editorial staff. We serve a diverse audience, urban to rural, ranging from parents to educators to psychological counselors, all with an interest in gifted children at all ages and grade levels. Our continuing challenge and goal is to include a great variety of topics which concern all of our readers—you—and the gifted individuals whose lives you shape.

As usual, our staff was mindful of this as we gathered information on parenting the gifted for this issue. We focused on different periods of parenting, beginning and more experienced, as well as making sure to include information that would be of particular interest and use to teachers. We read and reread the parenting articles, the teaching articles; we analyzed them again and again,



and as our work increased and press deadline approached, it became apparent that something critical was missing. Sorting the material into one pile for parents and another for teachers was slowing us down and making more work. At last, significantly, the related realization struck: parenting and teaching gifted children are not two separate tasks. Better not to sort them out, because they do not—and cannot—happen in isolation.

So this issue of our journal told us what it should be: *Common Ground....Parenting and Teaching Gifted Children.* Not alone, but together.

Dorothy Knopper's lead article addresses the need for cooperation and joint support among adults who touch the lives of gifted children. Joan Smutny explores the enhancing of linguistic gifts in children, a responsibility shared by parents and teachers. For Tactics, Gina Ginsberg Riggs draws on her years of experience as an effective parent advocate, while Sheri Nowak adds another perspective on parents of the gifted. Student Marie Becker gives the real scoop about cooperative learning, and, as always, our regular columnists broaden and enrich the issue.

Finally, as the highlight to our theme of common ground, we offer the first in a series of *Understanding Our Gifted* interviews conducted with those who, as both parents and teachers of gifted young people, have a double stake in their lives and education.

D.K.

Recognizing Gifted/Talented Parents

Sheri Nowak

• G/T parents are at school for negative reasons more often than for positive ones.

• G/T parents must frequently try to answer tough questions of life, i.e. *Why are the tops of the trees blowing south and the grass blowing north?* and *What do you know about occluded fronts?*

• G/T parents spend lots of money on educational things.

• G/T parents are reluctant to brag about the successes (or failures) of their gifted kids.

• G/T parents spend much time rationalizing the importance of school attendance to their gifted children.

• G/T parents have "cluttery" garages, basements and other special places where gifted kids collect important stuff.

• G/T parents can never forget something "dumb" they did because their gifted offspring keep reminding them of it.

• G/T parents' ears are tired.

• G/T parents have Kleenex handy for their gifted kids and themselves—for all the injustices of the world, as well as for misunderstandings about giftedness (and also for the tears of laughter!).

• G/T parents aren't perfect (our kids remind us of this), and they allow their gifted children to be less than perfect.

• G/T parents are awed by the wonder their gifted children find in this world—and by the beauty within their children's minds and hearts.

Sheri Nowak, Assistant Professor of Gifted, Talented and Creative, at Emporia State University, Kansas, has served as Director of Gifted Education for the Nebraska Department of Education.

Laura Goodman

ParentSpace

The Myth of the Charmed Life

"Oh," they say with a certain edge to that single syllable, "you have a gifted child." Or, wistfully, something like, "You're so lucky. Ours are just plain normal."

They have no idea, these other parents, what some of us would give for an occasional, prolonged dose of "normal." They hear words — gifted, talented, highly gifted, grade-level acceleration, pull-out classes, GT programs, special schools — and believe they get the picture: gifted kids and their parents have it all, a charmed life. I know people say and believe these things, because they have said as much to us and to other parents we know. What people see, or think they see, from the outside often has little to do with everyday reality inside the "gifted" household.

The uninitiated have no idea what it's really like, day-in and day-out, at our house, and not at yours either I'm sure. Believe me, it has not once occurred to me that, as a result of our son's gifts, I live a charmed life. To the contrary, in the last 10 years I've often wondered exactly what I did to deserve the wild ride of this existence.

Like lots of people, I thought I'd have a cute button of a baby who would skip through a sunny childhood assembling Lincoln Log houses and hanging out with buddies from a Little League team, who'd go happily off to neighborhood schools and graduate from high school in 2004 along with the other kids from the crop of '86. I was expecting, perhaps idealizing, "normal" the whole way. Well, what we actually got was a cute button of a baby who started talking to us almost immediately and rarely has come up for air since. The talking button grew into the little kid who, at 2, informed me one day that from that moment on he would never take another nap and never watch another episode of *Sesame Street* because it was "boring." He wasn't kidding. This was the child who never had much use for toys; he liked to talk, to tell stories and *discuss* things. "Was Jimmy Carter a good president?" he wanted to know; he hadn't turned 3 yet. Little League, team sports? He tried, but they weren't for him. And school. He goes to one that suits who and what he is, but it isn't public and it's a half hour's drive out of our neighborhood. No doubt he will graduate after the millennium, but we're leaving blank the year's last digit. Sometimes the only normal thing it seems he's ever done is need a set of plain braces.

I think people who don't live with gifted youngsters can't know or imagine what life is like with them. Without getting any specifics beforehand, I bet I'd feel right at home walking through your front door, though, into a domestic zone that would send the intensity-meter reading deep into the red.

How do we parents cope, stay in balance, function in settings in which our children do not fall within "the norm?" How do we manage both the difficulties and challenges inherent in life with these dynamos, while enjoying and supporting the wonders of and wonderful things about them? Where can we go with our stories, our troubles, our joys, our questions? Where is the comfort and understanding and the space to spread out and be what we are: parents of extraordinary youngsters in a world that doesn't much recognize or understand them, and when it does is sometimes fearful or resentful of them?

I know where I go. Straight to MOSKs. Moms of Smart Kids is how we refer to ourselves, a group of mothers with children who operate way outside the bounds of "normal." A few years ago several of us felt the need, and one of us, bless her, stepped up to organize. We leave our households to fend for themselves one Friday night every month or so, carrying our covered dishes and weeks' worth of grist, and, boy, do we mill it. We *talk*. It's the one judgment-free place we have where we can tell our stories, pore over our troubles, share our pride and our joys, ask hard, scary questions and know there will be answers, or at least identification with and understanding of them. No one simplifies because there is no need; we all get it, the complex, complicated version, because we live it too. Those Friday nights all else falls away and six or ten, or however many of us can come, take and give the opportunity to live in what is for

(Continued on page 6)

Sandra Berger

Surfing the Net

Let's continue the trip that we began in the last issue to Internet sites where you can find accurate information about disabilities.

Once again, our first stop is the AskERIC Virtual Library and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education — my home away from home. The digest titled *Gifted But Learning Disabled: A Puzzling Paradox* provides useful information on recognizing this group of learners, and offers some advice on how to help them. The WWW address is: URL:*http://gopher://ericir.syr.edu:70/11/Clearinghouses/16houses/ERIC_EC*. If you receive an error message ("unable to connect to remote host") try again later. This is true for all gopher and web sites.

On your way to the above site, stop and browse through the Infoguides produced by AskERIC. Many of these handy guides provide information on learning styles or disabilities, and the easy-to-use search tool lets you get right to the topicyou want. URL:*gopher://ericir.syr.edu:70/77/InfoGuides/.guides/infoguides*.

Some experts believe that learning disabilities are mislabeled learning style preferences. If you're interested in learning styles, you might surf on over to Pennsylvania State University *gopher://psupena.psu.edu:70/7%24k?learning*.

Information on disabilities is scattered over a wide variety of Internet sites. It's important to keep in mind that the most useful and accurate information can usually be found at a site that has been developed by a university or organization. I have found the following Internet gopher sites to be particularly useful.

DISABILITIES GOPHER SITES

- Cornucopia of Disability Information (CODI)
  This site provides the complete text for ADA
  gopher valdor.cc.buffalo.edu
- Kent State University
  gopher shiva.educ.kent.edu
  Deaf Education Resources Archive
- Rehabilitation Resource Center
  A database on dyslexia
  gopher sjuvm.stjohns.edu
- University of Maryland
  gopher info.umd.edu
- University of Washington
  gopher hawking.u.washington.edu

DISABILITY INFORMATION ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY RESOURCES ONLINE
This web site is quite comprehensive, and includes information on a wide variety of disabilities. Links are available to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Psychological Association and some out-of the way places like the Waisman Center Home Page at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Waisman Center is one of 14 national centers dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about human development and developmental disabilities through research and practice.
URL:*http://mail.bcpl.lib.md.us/~sandyste/p_01.html#ld*

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY INTERNET GOPHER
This site provides access to several resources for K-12 education on learning disabilities in the dyslexia database, and an archive of information from two disability related listservs that include learning disabilities as subjects. This site is also a major link to other disabilities sites.
URL:*gopher://sjumusic.stjohns.edu:70/1-GOP/%40uni%3arrc.menu*

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND at COLLEGE PARK INFORM SYSTEM
This web site has a vast amount of educational resources on disabilities, including learning disabilities. The contents of one menu are devoted to software for learning disabilities.
URL:*http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Disability/Journals/Learning*

YAHOO (SOCIETY AND CULTURE: DISABILITIES)
Yahoo is one of the primary search engines on the Internet. Information is categorized to make it easy for "newbies" to search for information. The section for disabilities is called "society and culture: disabilities." To get to Yahoo, simply type *ttp://yahoo.com*. The above URL takes you right to the disabilities area. Yahoo's disability site includes hard-to-find information on the more typical disabilities, and some unusual ones like

(Continued on next page)

ParentSpace

Continued from page 4

us our "real world." It is remarkable. *It makes a difference.*

I hope you have a group, something akin to a MOSKs or a DOSKs. Or at least one other parent who lives nearby and leads a "charmed" life similar to yours, who talks the talk you understand and wants to hear your every detail too. If you do, be grateful; if you don't, maybe you could start something. If there's another gifted child you know or know of, ask his or her parent out for a cup of coffee; it can be as simple as that. And as you're sitting there together, casually throw out, "So, tell me what it's really like at your house," and then be prepared. You know for what.

Seems there are some myths that just beg to be debunked.

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Interact!

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(See page 20)

Surfing the Net

Continued from page 5

hyperlexia—pervasive developmental disorder with autistic-like symptoms, but with a strong visual ability to decode and a precocious ability to read. URL:*http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Disabilities*

EVAN KEMP ASSOCIATES–DISABILITY RESOURCES Site features disability tips of the month, One Step Ahead newsletter, Disability Mall. Site is sponsored by Evan Kemp Associates, a company managed by people with disabilities. URL:*http://disability.com/*

NATIONAL INFO. CENTER FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES (NICHCY) NICHCY's site is under construction. Please wear a hard hat and watch for falling debris. Be sure to check out the useful online fact sheets. URL: *gopher://aed.aed.org:70/11/.disability/.nichcy*

That ends our trip for now. I would love to hear from you with questions or comments about this column. You can reach me by postal mail at CEC/ERIC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22191. But e-mail is better! Just send a message to *sberger@inet.ed.gov.*

See you on the Net.

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

Sandra Berger is the Information Specialist for Gifted Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education in Reston, Virginia. She is the author of ***College Planning for Gifted Students.***

Cooperative Learning

Last fall, Nancy A. Schifo, the Gifted Resource Center teacher at Hinsdale (Illinois) Middle School, read a social studies essay written by one of her students. She subsequently sent that essay on to UOG, saying that in her opinion "no one has described a gifted student's experiences with cooperative learning groups in the regular classroom in a more honest and genuine manner... I wish Marie's paper could be required reading for every teacher and curriculum expert." While we can't require teachers or curriculum experts or parents to read this 14 year old's essay, we can offer it here with the strong suggestion that everyone do so.

"LEARNING" TO WORK IN GROUPS

Marie Becker

8th Grade, Hinsdale Middle School

One of the hottest buzzwords in education nowadays is "cooperative learning." The theory behind these group projects is that this teaches us how to work together, especially with people we wouldn't necessarily choose ourselves, and helps us learn cooperation and leadership. As these projects very often involve a class presentation, we will also improve our verbal skills and encourage creativity. Research is often needed, so we get to review those very necessary skills, too, right?

Sorry. It just doesn't work that way, at least not in my experience. In my entire life I have not had a pleasant, useful experience with a group project in the everyday classroom. In fact, I have had very many miserable experiences with them.

(Continued on page 8)

Gloria Frender

Learning To Learn

Cross-Content Learning Strategies

Students who learn and apply specific strategies they can use across all content areas are more successful. These strategies provide learning consistency and form a solid foundation for study skills. A variety of techniques may be combined in an ongoing process to enhance efficient and effective use of study time, long term comprehension, correlation of concepts and details and deeper understanding of subject matter. Students should begin with the following strategies and gradually add more to truly benefit from all subject areas.

Summary Log

This strategy helps in summarizing information on a daily basis, reinforces learning progress and provides a good resource for studying for quizzes, tests, class discussions, etc.

1. Using a notebook or binder for each class, label a section "Summary Log."
2. If possible, take one to two minutes at the end of each class to briefly summarize three or more major concepts, important vocabulary words, formulas, etc.
3. At home review the summary from each class and add to it, or repeat step #2 if using class time is not possible.
4. Example entries might include: lists of vocabulary words, dates, important phrases, simple diagrams or drawings, notes regarding important text pages, handouts or worksheets.
5. Date all entries; many may be placed on one page.
6. Be brief and use only simple lists and diagrams, two- to three-word phrases and appropriate abbreviations whenever possible.
7. Don't worry about spelling unless writing vocabulary words or directed by the teacher that correct spelling is essential. Getting the ideas down on paper is the main idea.

STUDY TIME WARM-UP

Similar to starting up a car on a cold day, a mind operates much better when it's warmed up and ready to go. To get a car going, the key must be put in the ignition, the engine turned on and allowed to warm up for a little while. Then, when it's time to go, the whole car runs smoothly and efficiently. Like warming up a car, the activity described below warms up a student's mind and helps it focus more rapidly in an organized manner. It's to be used at the beginning of every study session.

Memory tip: When trying to form a habit with things that must be done sequentially, link ideas with familiar and repeated sequential physical actions. For developing the habit of warming up "the studying engine," consistently link the following questions and answers with physical actions. As a reminder of the start-up routine, put the first two columns on an index card and post it in the study area.

Physical Action	Question	Answer
1. Pull your chair out from your desk.	1. What should I study first?	1. Geometry
2. Sit down in your chair.	2. What did we do in class today? What was the topic?	2. Types of triangles
3. Open your book or notebook. Pick up pencil.	3. What are three specific concepts or new vocabulary words?	3. Right, obtuse, and acute triangles

These strategies may seem time consuming at first, but with consistent practice they will become a habit that saves much organizational and learning time.

You don't "find" time for what's important — you make it!

Gloria Frender, an Educational Consultant from Colorado, has taught elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary and is the mother of two gifted children. She is the author of ***Learning to Learn*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success.***

Cooperative Learning

Continued from page 6

As a student who is considered academically gifted, I pressure myself to get excellent grades. One of my main objections to group projects stems from that. I've simply spent too much time and energy on trying to salvage projects and make peace among group members for the sake of an A or at least a passing grade. Also, because I am considered to be gifted and get good grades, I have had the very unpleasant and discouraging experience of realizing group members are perfectly content to leave me all the work – hey, I'll probably do a great job, right? My experience has been that a lot of kids just don't care about learning, grades or cooperation. I am deeply disturbed by the feeling that to save my own grade, I have to cover for them.

Some kids care a little more, but many of them don't pay attention in class, don't listen, are easily distracted and simply haven't developed adequate work habits. This past weekend I worked on a science project with two girls who had this problem (a third girl simply didn't show). Even though I was absent the day this project was assigned, I had to infer what was wanted since no one could explain it to me. I spent hours trying to explain the concepts we have studied since the first week of school, which, I discovered today when we began our presentation, they still don't get. I phrased ideas, spelled words, designed the visual aids, tried to explain tactfully why certain ideas were just wrong and did almost everything else. However, in my attempts not to be bossy, I realized that I didn't give those girls enough structure. The presentation was messy and disorganized, with enormous errors and poorly-planned and designed games.

This brings me to a problem I've had a lot of trouble with. Like many middle-school students, I find the lines between being a leader and being bossy to be blurry and, as a result, I'm scared to take charge. In 4th grade I had a terrible experience with this while working on a project with four other people. Absences had made it impossible for us to complete the project in school, so I spent a weekend desperately trying to pull things together. Only one girl made time to work, so I did my best to organize our presentation, again without seeming bossy. In class, our presentation started to crumble and I took over, since no one else in the group seemed willing to do so. I corrected errors, made suggestions, and tried to pull stuff together in an organized, interesting way. For my efforts, I got yelled at by my teacher for trying to take over and exclude other people; during a class wrap-up of the activity, she didn't discuss poor organization or how important it is that people follow through, she talked about people being too bossy, and someone said that it was the GRC (Gifted Resource Center) kids who took over.

Now I know it was silly to let that affect me as much as it has over the past three years. After all, I reasoned, if a teacher, an educated, fair, authoritative person thought that and encouraged other people to think that, did everyone see me that way? Was it wrong to try to correct errors, help people come up with creative ideas, try to keep people on task? Apparently so. By now I know that many people think of me as a fair, intelligent and organized person, so I feel a little better about taking charge, but that teacher's words still affect me.

Many gifted kids I know also question the value of group projects, as do some parents. The only truly positive experience most of us have had with group projects has been through GRC. I realize that in my life I may often have to work with disorganized people who really aren't focused or particularly interested in the outcome of a project. But why should it be necessary for me to spend valuable time trying to teach someone how to use the card catalog, take notes or go over what we did in class? And be nice and tactful about it too? It's not fun.

I firmly believe that every complaint carries more weight when some kind of alternative to it is proposed. These are my suggestions for alternatives. The most important is to **teach** us how to work in groups. Most of us have been doing group projects since 1st or 2nd grade, but a lot of people just haven't picked up cooperative learning skills yet. If someone hasn't learned by doing after all this time, they're not likely to learn it all of a sudden. Give us some basic techniques and procedures to use for every group project which we can use for the rest of our lives. Some examples: first, choose a leader. The way I see it, a leader should be fair, organized, a good listener but able to make decisions. If the group can't decide on one in ten minutes, pick a name out of a hat or have a teacher choose. Once work has started, we shouldn't

(Continued on next page)

Tactics

A Call for Parent Advocacy

Gina Ginsberg Riggs

The educational survival of our children is at stake. Programs for gifted children all over the country are being eliminated because of the so-called reform or inclusion movement. We must join now with all other parents of gifted children to assume responsibility for making a difference in our children's lives. We must help them reach for the stars.

If our children do not get the opportunity to learn all they are able to learn, it is because not enough people insist on appropriate education for them. As parents we must organize to become a respected and sizable force which can make a difference.

Following are suggestions for transforming individual parents into a powerful advocacy group:

Play the Numbers
Count your allies and know your opponents. It only takes a majority to do what has to be done. People fall into three groups: Group #1 consists of people who share your beliefs and support you. Count their numbers but don't spend time on them because they are already on your side. Group #2 consists of your opposition—those who will never be friends of the gifted. Don't frustrate yourself trying to change the unchangeable. Instead, devote your time and energies to Group #3, the large and uncommitted middle which is ready to be convinced. You must rally the people of Group #1 and those won over from Group #3 to raise the necessary majority to keep gifted programs alive.

Infiltrate Education
Your child's education depends on your ability to work with the people who work with your child. Prove to educators and school staff that we care about education for *all* children—not only the gifted. Serve on boards of education, judge sports events, help in libraries and act as matchmakers between schools and resources in business and industry. We must become parents who eventually can cash in our good conduct medals for quality in the education of our gifted children.

Become a Joiner
Now is the time to join your state organization for the gifted (each state has one); become active in PTA and get elected to the school board or actively support candidates who share your views on education. One parent alone gets lost in the bureaucracy. A group of parent-taxpayers—the more the better—is difficult to ignore. Remember that parents are probably the largest single group of people anywhere. And the 5 million parents of the nation's 2 1/2 million gifted children can, if united, make any bureaucracy listen and act. Parents outnumber education's decision makers. Parents can be education's biggest source of support—or constitute

(Continued on next page)

Cooperative Learning

Continued from page 8

argue about anything for more then ten minutes. If two people have different ideas, each gets five minutes to make a case, then the group should vote. In the event of a tie, the leader decides. Tell us what we can do if people don't follow through.

The present system of doing group projects doesn't help anyone, neither the more academically talented nor the less academically talented. Work should be fairly divided among all group members, and it isn't fair for some students to spend hours agonizing over whether or not they seem too bossy or if the teacher will lower grades if group members argue. Students should know they won't be blamed for others' incompetence, lack of interest or lack of responsibility to make the group project a success. Above all, whatever is necessary must be done in our school settings to ensure that the terms "cooperative learning" and "working together" mean just that.

Tactics

Continued from page 9

formidable opposition.

Be an Advocate, Not an Adversary
We *must* change public attitudes so that everyone in education, business and the public at large will be supportive, no longer holding our gifted students to minimum standards. Instead of dwelling on "gloom and doom" about the state of education, we must awaken pride in what our most able students can do when given equal opportunity to learn all they are able to learn. Then, they can and will compete successfully with students anywhere in the world.

Mighty Is the Pen—and FAX, Phone and E-Mail
The price of admittance to any home or office is a postage stamp, a phone call or an e-mail message. We must contact educators, boards of education and legislators in positions of power and convince them to support gifted education. Communicate, provide accurate information, offer help and say thank you. Reach them all and keep the cause of gifted children visible.

Shake the Media Tree
Because the media is interested in anything that will inform, inspire, amuse, move and even anger people, it offers a novel and powerful opportunity for advocates of the gifted. Gifted kids do the things mentioned above, as well as provide good photo opportunities. Be persistent, super polite and "oh so helpful" as we use the media to bring visibility to the special needs of gifted children.

Peddle Your Influence
Everybody knows somebody in the right place. Now is the time to make contact, collect old favors and ask for new ones, remind legislators of our voting power and provide the right information when they are too busy to gather it themselves.

Don't Overlook the Private Sector
The private sector has been calling out for years, but education is not listening. Because it is vitally interested in student preparedness for the world of work, this able, wealthy and waiting group has people, places, time and money—often tax-deductible—and it is ready to act. Gifted students are in the uniquely favorable position of being the very group which the private sector needs for future leadership. Help schools identify these resources to build the necessary support of our future problem solvers, creative thinkers, artists, scientists and cyberspace technicians.

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In our work on behalf of gifted children, many of us walk to the beat of a different drummer, sometimes out of step with the rest of the world. Don't give up when people don't want to listen, when gifted programs are in jeopardy and when the special needs of gifted children are once again put on the back burner. We can learn from our own children, youngsters who persevere in their learning and solve problems with tenacity. Their stick-to-itiveness can be downright aggravating, but do they quit?

Surely among us, the parents of 2 1/2 million gifted children, we can find the dedication, energy, time, expertise and leadership to make sure that these young people have the chance to learn all they are able to learn.

Roll up your sleeves. We've got work to do!

Gina Ginsberg Riggs, Executive Director of Gifted Child Society in New Jersey, is the founder of the National Alliance of State Associations for Gifted and Project Director of PING (Parent Network for Gifted). She is first and foremost a parent and parent advocate for gifted children.

Crossing the Line

Continued from page 1

easily and cooperatively with the educational system. Yet parents often complain that there is a negative mind-set on the part of school staff, with teachers expressing resentment of gifted students. And teachers refer to "pushy parents" interfering with what goes on in their classrooms, not leaving them alone to do the jobs for which they are highly trained.

The solution is not as simple as a pat on the head and an admonition to try to get along. The only way to overcome such divisiveness is to emphasize the *common ground* shared by those of us who touch gifted children's lives daily, in the classroom or at home—or both.

Clark (1992) lists the following abilities as necessary for teachers to develop in order to be effective with gifted learners; parents must also possess the same or comparable traits in their interaction

(Continued on next page)

Crossing the Line

Continued from page 10

with gifted offspring:

1. They must have a knowledge and understanding of the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, needs, and problems found in gifted students...

2. They must be able to develop a flexible, individualized, differentiated curriculum appropriate to meeting the individual gifted pupil's needs...

3. They must be able to create an environment in which the gifted can use their strengths, explore their personal and interpersonal development, risk new areas of thought and action, feel challenged...

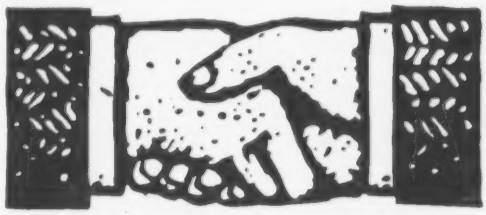
4. They must be able to teach the gifted learner the skills of higher level cognitive thinking, integration of mind and body, self-actualization, intuitive development, and self-evaluation.

5. They must know how to nurture creativity in all its aspects of thinking, feeling, intuiting, and expressing talent through products.

6. They must be able to encourage in gifted learners a sense of social awareness and commitment to humanity and to their environment, and a respect for the worth and dignity of others. (P.482)

Certainly we can agree with Clark that the classroom teacher's role is of critical importance in a learning environment, while a parent in the home is responsible, among many other things, for fostering the excitement of learning and actualizing giftedness. Neither teaching nor parenting, particularly of gifted children, is effective in a vacuum. Teachers and parents, each in their own unique areas of expertise and influence, are actually interdependent in these children's lives, and positive support of that kind of symbiotic relationship will result in more effective relationships and outcomes for all.

The following anecdotes are out of real life, but in the tradition of *Choose Your Own Adventures* books, I've fashioned a choice of endings for each. One way leads to gridlock and animosity, the other to flexibility and cooperation from which, depending on the chosen ending, the child in question will emerge as loser or winner.



• The parents of a gifted 2nd grader became increasingly concerned as they watched their daughter gradually lose her excitement for school and learning, developing serious symptoms of underachievement and apathy. Concerned about whether their expectations for this very bright child were realistic, they requested testing to determine her potential. When informed that the school no longer tested children on a regular basis, the parents asked, "Don't we have a right to know where our daughter is performing at the beginning of the year, what we can expect of her academically, and what her achievement level actually is at the end of that school year?" Here's where the story forks into two possible endings: The response from school staff might be, "It's no longer our policy to supply that information," resulting in two angry parents; or, "We don't usually test children, but given the circumstances we'll make an exception and work with you to evaluate the results."

• After a lengthy and intense meeting of key middle school staff members—principal, teachers, counselor, psychologist, appropriate curriculum specialists—a recommendation was made to the parents of an exceptionally gifted and talented 7th-grade student that they seek other more challenging alternatives than the school was capable of providing. The middle school could recommend and work with the family on several options: private school, radical acceleration to high school or college, homeschooling. The fork comes here in this story: Parental response could be indignation that the neighborhood school could not or would not provide appropriate services for their special child; or it could be one of welcome acceptance of the educators' honesty and grateful acknowledgment of their conscientious referral to more challenging opportunities.

If there were one perfect textbook with instructions on how to parent and to teach, contention would be minimal. School staff and moms and dads would share concerns and philosophies more easily, making this discussion moot. Unfortunately none of my courses on educational techniques adequately prepared me for my first day of teaching; nor did I ever find the ultimate manual on how to parent. And we know these Utopian resources can never

(Continued on next page)

Crossing the Line

Continued from page 11

exist. In a letter to a student teacher, 25-year teaching veteran Metzger (1996) declares, "Like parenting, teaching makes us humble." (p. 348) So, we must keep trying and working together.

Knopper's (1995) advice to parents emphasizes parent-school partnerships to individualize curriculum for gifted students:

• *Don't keep knowledge to yourself...You do know your child best.*

• *Become well informed about gifted education and education in general...There is no* best *program to recommend.* Suggest options that meet the needs of diverse learning styles and interests, and appropriate alternatives such as acceleration and independent study. *Ask for flexibility...*

• *Be proactive rather than reactive. When a problem occurs, contact the teacher immediately.*

• *Offer help: Drive on field trips, work in the school library, share your individual talents and skills..., volunteer to lighten the classroom teacher's load...*

• *Encourage a consortium effort to improve education for all children. Go beyond the field of gifted education, involving PTA, media, business and community groups.* (p.44-46)

Teachers present learning experiences at school and parents provide them at home, but eventually both must step back and allow each child to take responsibility for his or her own learning. It is the job and the privilege for parents and educators to work together for and with children who move so quickly through our lives into adulthood.

Adolescents eventually discover how to cross that wide dance floor and have a good time together. Similarly, with effort and understanding rooted in that common ground they share, parents and educators must find ways to cross the invisible line that often separates them from each other. They must develop friendly interactions across conference tables as they discuss, compromise and learn from each other on the way to shaping solutions. There's a child waiting who needs their combined and cooperative support.

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Dorothy Knopper, Publisher/Editor of Open Space Communications, Inc., has been a Consultant for G/T education at state, county and local levels in Colorado and Michigan, and University of Colorado instructor of teacher education. A long time advocate for the gifted, she is the author of ***Parent Education: Parents as Partners***.

Linguistic Gifts

Continued from page 1

modeling, expatiation, open-ended questioning, expansion and recasting.

In modeling, the child, much like a magnet, draws words and usages from what he or she hears, whether it be in everyday conversations or in books that excite and delight. We may hear and even marvel at questions from a bright 1st grader, such as, "Wasn't it unjust how these people were treated? Why couldn't something have been done for them?" After hearing a parent read *The Biggest Bear* by Lynd Ward (1952, Boston: Houghton Mifflin), a gifted 5 year old responded, "It's really humiliating. Poor Johnny Orchard didn't have a bear skin hanging on the barn, like everyone else did. I wish I'd been there to help him."

Expatiation, or elaboration, asks adults to add relevant information to a topic that the child has introduced. Gifted children, so hungry to know more, constantly introduce new topics. Parents must feed children's needs for knowledge by providing new information on topics that interest them. A child may ask, "Is there an end to the universe? Is there an end to time? When does time start or stop?" After discussing the topic together, the child should be encouraged to seek more answers from the science section of the library, or, possibly, send letters to scientists via computers or regular mail. The thrill of the young letter writer when a response arrives

(Continued on next page)

Linguistic Gifts

Continued from page 12

can act as encouragement and reward to a parent.

Open-ended questioning is particularly relevant to working with the young child. It encourages comfort with asking questions that elicit many answers rather than just one word. This type of question encourages young children to use their formidable imaginations and expand on their new insights. Originality blossoms in response to questions like, "What do you think will happen next in this story?" "If you were the author and wanted to change the ending, how would you write it?" "What does the universe consist of?" "Are there things we can't touch, taste, feel, see or smell?" "What would happen if we didn't have those five senses?"

Expansion involves corrected feedback, partially sharing a child's incomplete statement to make it complete. This is not a negative response, but rather a way in which the adult enables the child to feel comfortable while affirming new possibilities. "The boy knew he had to give back the toy he took," a 4 year old answered in response to a question about a story's resolution. "And that he also should apologize, would you say?" asked the father, helping his son expand his thinking.

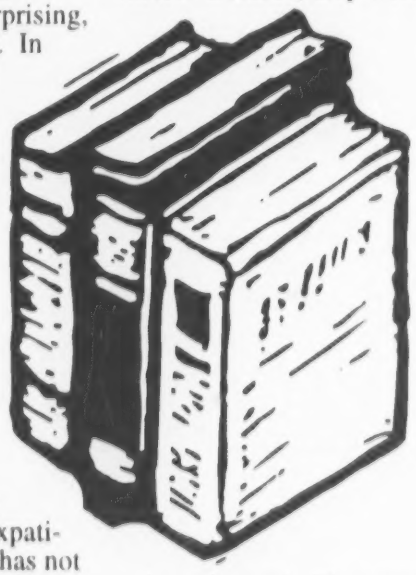
Recasting a child's statement sustains the original content but may alter the sentence's structure and extend its complexity. If a child says "Whales are mammals," for instance, the adult may want to add, "Yes, whales *are* warm-blooded animals who breath in air, have gills and give live birth."

What better vehicles are there for applying these five strategies in creative expression than the reading of children's books? Never have book shelves in stores and school and community libraries offered such evidence of imagination and originality. It's there in every form: poetry, stories, fairy tales, classics and chapter books, ready to be kept, read repeatedly and cherished or borrowed and appreciated, then traded for more.

While reading Mary Ann Hoberman's much-loved book *A House is a House for Me* (1978, New York: Viking Press) we could easily encourage children to make their own dwelling associations. Hoberman's "A shell is a house for a turtle" and "a cave is a house for a bear" can lead to any number of wonderful, mind-stretching, and perhaps surprising, leaps for a bright little one. In Laura Joffe Numeroff's *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (1991, New York: HarperCollins), a child can quickly move from her line, "If you give the moose a cookie then how much milk would he like?" to "If you give the moose a new *National Geographic*, do you think he'd like to take pictures?"

Richly illustrated books offer limitless avenues for open-ended questioning, expatiating and modeling. Who has not seen a young child thrill to the artwork of Chris Van Allsburg? So many gifted children seem to have an immediate affinity for beauty and are sensitive to art and illustrations. The picture books of Thomas Locker, for instance, offer adult and child entry into a marvelous world in which his illustrations of vivid colors and obvious imagery reflect the richness of the Dutch masters. As in all effective picture books, including many Caldecott Medal winners, Locker invites readers into a world of colors and feelings which elicit an immediate response.

Recently I was reading Locker's *The Young Artist* (1989, New York: Dial Books) to a group of gifted 2nd and 3rd graders who showed an immediate empathy for the young protagonist. In this story the boy artist very much wants to paint nature and landscapes and not be restricted to portraits glamorizing the vain lords and ladies of the castle. A bright 7 year old commented, "The boy had too much integrity to bow down to those lords and ladies. Besides, they were so



vain and proud. They were just a fake." The ability of books to transform children's values and the way they see their world and participate in it is also obvious in such books as E.B. White's *Trumpet of the Swan* (1970, New

(Continued on next page)

Linguistic Gifts

Continued from page 13

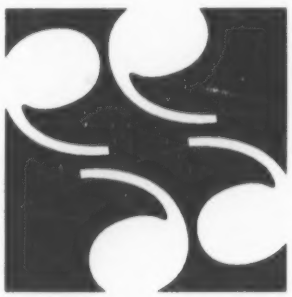
York: Harper & Row) and *Charlotte's Web* (1952, New York: HarperCollins).

Parents can make books come alive by engaging children in the process of making their own books or illustrations, including a sentence or two, or even just a phrase, per page. We can encourage children to believe that they could write books of their own, and not just in the future. Through open-ended questions, children become participants in the reading and writing process, realizing that their ideas are respected and can be shared. For example, I cherish the opportunity to bring in historical fiction and biographies appropriate to young children and like to integrate them into social studies. Children can make books of their own about that time, culture, customs, people or causes. Choosing the Revolutionary War, a child might delve into the rights of the colonists, the challenges that the early pioneers in this country faced, their interactions with native Americans or the everyday life of Colonial children.

Poetry is another splendid avenue for developing imagination and increasing verbal facility. Teaching that a poet is a photographer in words helps children grasp one of the fundamentals of poetry. Through implication and imagery, poetry asks for open ended responses and divergent answers. Reading poetry should begin early, at preprimary and primary levels. Gifted children delight in the implied and the symbolic, in relishing choice of words and special ways in which they can be placed on paper, including free verse. Poetry offers powerful models of language and imagination.

Adults can draw upon Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974, New York: Harper & Row), *Light in the Attic* (1981, New York: HarperCollins) and *The Giving Tree* (1964, New York: HarperCollins) to spark conversations that encourage a growing sensitivity to words and ideas. A.A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young* (1924, New York: Dutton) and *Now We Are Six* (1927, New York: Dutton) offer diversified, easily identifiable settings for young children. Jack Prelutsky, Aileen Fisher and Dr. Seuss furnish hours of delight for the very young. A 6 year old, reading Aileen Fisher's poem "Cut in the Snow" (in Cole, J. selected by, 1984, *A New Treasury of Children's Poetry*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday) said, "If cats don't know that every footprint is a rose, what about people? Could a person step gingerly through a garden' when it snows? I'd like to try. I think my parents weigh too much to do that."

Young children enjoy rhyme scheme, of course, but also should be encouraged to become acquainted with poets who use free verse. Free verse communicates qualities of flexibility, expansiveness and originality. Parents and children can try their hands at making up verses. Encouraging poetic expression is one way "to help gifted youngsters articulate their feelings, and to prepare them for the particular spin that being gifted puts on the normal developmental tasks faced by all children," writes Halsted (1988). In her annotated bibliography of books appropriate for gifted readers, Halsted classifies books in five categories: identity, aloneness, getting along with others, developing imagination and drive to understand.



A learning environment that encourages free open communication of ideas must naturally cherish the accessibility of written material.

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Linguistic Gifts

Continued from page 14

A learning environment that encourages free open communication of ideas must naturally cherish the accessibility of written material. Gifted young children crave opportunities to observe, interpret and respond to magazines, picture books, fiction and non-fiction, biographies and autobiographies. They are sensitive to the use of language, always developing their capacity to interact with words, to cultivate values and to ask questions. Lillian Moore's *I Feel the Same Way* (1969, New York: Atheneum), a collection of poetry, mostly free verse, enables bright children to better understand that feelings count and that their own developed sensitivity can be shared by others. Identity is affirmed and they know they aren't alone in that sensitivity.

The Caldecott book winner *Shadow* (1982, New York: MacMillan), translated and illustrated by Marsha Brown, written in free verse, offers the metaphor of a shadow in an African setting. This poem intrigued a bright 1st grader to become more perceptive about the world around him, asking, "Do you think children in America can see as many shadows as children in Africa?" Then he asked, "What is the real meaning of a shadow, anyway?" Langston Hughes' poem "Dreams" (1986, *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, New York: Alfred Knopf), which tells readers to hold on to their dreams and compares life without dreams to barren fields of snow, elicited many value-filled responses from 2nd graders. One girl stated, with some degree of conviction, "I want to be a mathematician. Is that what Langston Hughes meant when he said, 'I don't want to be frozen with snow'? I want to keep going."

Each day is a fresh opportunity for responding to and engaging others, for interacting and reacting. *Read to your children daily, holding them on your lap or snuggled close,* urges a New England kindergarten teacher. Read enthusiastically, so the story comes alive. Let them choose the stories to be read and then answer questions as they come up.

As early as 1924, Louis Terman (Smutny, et al.,1989) identified language use as an index of high intelligence, and today, in homes and classrooms around the world, we see and hear that this is so. We know, too, that extra helpings of imagination and creativity are required from us in enhancing expression and comprehension in our gifted children. Their linguistic gifts will soar ever higher when adults recognize the varied possibilities for nurturing those gifts.

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Life Lines

Scenes from the Lives of Our Gifted

Nate, barely 9, brought home the official list of 3300 Spelling Bee words. Astounding everyone, as he was by far the youngest of the district hopefuls, Nate had spelled his way into the state finals. Now he was busy preparing, poring over the pages of words.

Thumbing through the pages, his mom asked him to spell "cochleariform." Nate nailed it. "But what does it mean?" she asked.

"I don't have a clue," he said, "and it doesn't matter!"

"So how can you spell it?" she wanted to know.

"Oh, if I can read 'em, I can spell 'em," he said and gathered up the pages brimming with words such as "oxydactyl" and "gahnite" and "ombrophobous."

Compiled and edited by ***Laura Goodman***

Creative Ventures

Quilts, Part II

As artifacts and symbols, quilts offer much to youngsters learning about America, its history and the traditions of its people as a culture and society.

Patchwork quilts began in Colonial America as a matter of scarcity. Mary Cobb's *The Quilt-Block History of Pioneer Days with Projects Kids Can Make* (1995, Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press) is a nonfiction book for children which explores the history of quilts in America. It begins with an explanation of how the scarcity and great cost of fabrics in the colonies in the 1600s precipitated the creation of quilt blocks to repair blankets originally brought from Europe. Over time, new patterns emerged and spread across the country as pioneer women traveled westward from the Atlantic shores. Utilizing this book, ably illustrated by Jan Davey Ellis, children can learn much about the creativity and resourcefulness of early American women, as well as use the patterns provided to create their own quilt blocks.

Today, scarcity translates as the lack of material goods or poverty. Quilts fashioned into clothing make socioeconomic statements in two admirably told and illustrated Appalachian tales with similar themes. Dolly Parton's *Coat of Many Colors* (1994, San Francisco: HarperCollins) and Lauren Mills' *The Rag Coat* (1991, Boston: Little, Brown and Company) feature children who wear quilted coats created from rags and scraps of material because their parents cannot afford warm coats/outer garments for them. Songwriter and performer Dolly Parton has transformed her first successful song into her first children's book, telling an autobiographical story of a poor Tennessee girl whose mother makes her a rag coat from pieces of donated cloth. The young girl comes to value the coat far beyond its modest monetary worth. Judith Sutton's watercolor illustrations and quilt borders perfectly complement Parton's text.

In the rendering of another story of poverty and pride, Mills tells of Minna, who can't go to school because she has no coat to wear when it's cold. When her beloved father dies from a coal mining-induced illness, the family is left even more impoverished. Her mother and the other women in the community sacrifice both time and material to make Minna a beautiful rag coat; but when the other children ridicule her coat of rags, Minna, both angry and hurt, flees the school house. Then, remembering the words of bravery her father gave her, she returns to school and tells the children how the coat came to be, pointing out to a classmate that one scrap was a part of his baby blanket. Minna uses her quilted coat as a storytelling tool, one of immense beauty and power. Mills' watercolor illustrations are enchanting.

The Biblical story of Noah's Ark is retold in quilt pieces in a charming interactive book, Janet Bolton's *Mrs. Noah's Patchwork Quilt: A Journal of the Voyage with a Pocketful of Patchwork Pieces* (1995, Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel). Fabric artist Bolton imagines how Mrs. Noah passed the time aboard the ark as she made a quilt record of all the animals. Children meet pairs of giraffes, cheetahs, polar bears and other animals illustrated through Bolton's fabric art, and through observing how Mrs. Noah makes her story quilt they learn how quilts are made. End notes offer further information about quilts and quilting bees, while in the end pocket, children will find ten quilt squares plus instructions for use in creating their own quilts.

A final book worthy of mention on this journey is Ann Whitford Paul's ABC book *Eight Hands Round, A Patchwork Alphabet* (1991, New York: HarperCollins) which shows and explains common quilt patterns such as Jacob's Ladder and Tobacco Leaves. Both patterns and everyday life in the past are beautifully portrayed by the talented illustrator Jeanette Winter.

The richness and variety of American history and culture is evident not only in the quilts themselves, but in the wealth of literature that uses or is about them. Next time: more!

Jerry Flack, President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, is the author of ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Double Duty

Interviews from the Field

Among educators, there are those with an added stake in gifted education, who, on a daily basis, do double duty in this field as both teachers and parents. ***Understanding Our Gifted*** *approached some of these individuals with questions about their dual roles, and we offer here some of their answers. Interviewees include* ***Marilyn Wallace****, administrator and past teacher at Creative Children's Academy in Palatine, IL; her sons are 6 and 12 and are students at CCA.* ***David Abbott*** *teaches 3rd/4th grade at Horizons Alternative, a Boulder, CO public K-8 school, and before that taught 7 years in a regular elementary classroom; his son is 13 and his daughter is 10.* ***Sally Walker,*** *Educational Consultant from IL, has 17 years teaching experience at various levels, including 7 years with gifted kindergartners, as well as working with parents of the gifted for 15 years; two of her three daughters are college seniors and the third has already graduated.* ***Pat Hollingsworth*** *brings over 30 years teaching experience to her job as both director and teacher at University School for Gifted Children, University of Tulsa (OK); she has a daughter, 28, and a son, 32.* ***Dennis Corash*** *is the principal of Roy Moore Elementary School in Silt, CO and has 18 years experience in regular and gifted classrooms; he has two daughters, 9 and 7, and a son, 11.*

UOG: What is most rewarding and challenging in being both parents and teachers of gifted children?

Walker: The most challenging part of teaching gifted children all day and then going home to them in the evening was dealing with the extremely high energy level both exuded by the kids and required from me. The most rewarding part was surviving and making the most of all that energy expenditure.

Corash: In both teaching and parenting gifted children, the greatest reward is seeing and discovering with them, watching those light bulbs flash on, over and over. The challenge comes in seeing the lights turned out in your own children when they aren't learning new stuff, when the focus shifts onto weaknesses rather than strengths.

Abbott: Regardless of the child, gifted or not, it's hard to do both. I often lack the enthusiasm and freshness I wish I could always have. It's a treat to hang out with or teach my own kids and interact one-on-one with them after being with groups of kids all day. It's really given me an appreciation for individuality.

Wallace: What I bring to the home/school relationship is my knowledge of gifted children and an education that is appropriate for them. My dual role as parent and educator enables me to make better decisions at home and at school. My greatest challenge is backing away from my mother role and viewing my children's school experience with objectivity. I have to listen to what my boys say about their teachers, always mindful that they are my employees. This has actually helped me teach the boys a sense of responsibility for their learning; they know I won't ever join them in blaming a teacher for their difficulties.

UOG: How has your dual role made you a better teacher of the gifted in the classroom and a better parent to your own?

Hollingsworth: Having gifted children of my own, I learned of their intellectual maturity, especially in magical thinking and reasoning ability. As a teacher I'm so much more aware of amazing knowledge and understanding in kids. I look for that intellectual maturity in kids in my class, and I can encourage them to use it. I see that there is a range of teaching styles, although some aren't realistic. Teaching has given me a better perspective on ways to deal with children. I can see in my students the results of various parenting styles. The hover and rescue "helicopter" parent (Jim Fay's term) encourages children to be dependent and forgetful. The shouting commanding "drill sergeant" parent, again Jim Fay's term, gets compliance but with bitterness and resentment. Often I can help parents see an alternative to these extremes. From my experience as both teacher and parent I can help them find what is realistic.

Wallace: My administrative role and experience at school help me remain calm at home when my children exhibit "interesting" behavior. I can usually see that it is not uncommon behavior for gifted children and deal with it dispassionately. Conversely, knowing what goes on in my sons' lives in such detail, I have a greater understanding of and

(Continued on next page)

Double Duty

Continued from page 17

compassion for the frustrations of the students.

Corash: In the classroom I was a better teacher because I understood first-hand that what parents have to say about their children is the *truth*. I saw the need to form compacts with parents, teachers and kids for best educating our students. Also, I was made more aware of the daily struggles of a gifted child.

Abbott: Because of being a parent, I'm a better teacher of gifted students in the way I interact, the increased challenge level I know to provide and in the degree of discussion and level of conversation to expect of them. At home, I get to try out material on my own kids and read their reactions.

Walker: Having gifted kids at home made me a better teacher by, first of all, letting me understand what parents of my students were going through. It also helped me be more patient and flexible with the children. Because I knew how important it is, I went with kids' passions and bent the curriculum when necessary.

UOG: What are some of the everyday nuts and bolts you use to build real learning situations for students whose needs extend beyond the standard curriculum?

Corash: As for nuts and bolts, I think the greatest gift that can be given to the gifted is the ability to write and the development of study skills, such as notetaking and highlighting, to help them pursue their dreams. Students are helped so much by having a good foundation of organizational skills so that they can be researchers and devourers of knowledge on their own.

Walker: I saw gifted kindergartners as little hunks of Swiss cheese—little ones with amazing abilities and knowledge, but with holes in that knowledge. I tried to fill in the gaps. To do so, I used whatever I needed: groups, individualizing work, compacting, etc. I based classroom structure on Guilford's SOI model and taught to their strengths and remediated weaknesses. Mostly, it turned out to be an interweaving of the regular and more specialized curricula.

Hollingsworth: Many times gifted children never have to work hard. This leaves them with something like an unbalanced diet, but they must have balance. They must have creativity, but they also need to do the hard work of boring and routine things. Open-ended approaches work, like writing and drawing, but they must have required parameters and the kids must work within them.

Wallace: We all know that the materials and methods that work for one individual child may not meet the needs of another. The teachers hold many bags of tricks! We have an eclectic approach that has the very important element of flexibility built into it. Because we know how complex the children are, we cannot espouse any one teaching method or program. The bottom line is always the teacher's discernment in assessing what the child needs most.

UOG: Can you think of some strategies and/or classroom mechanics that either worked or didn't for your own gifted children?

Abbott: TAG pull-outs are sometimes the highlights of their days. Their only problems, really, are when they're in situations without choices or when they're bored.

Hollingsworth: My kids never could pursue their intellectual interests in school. There was too much emphasis on workbooks and repetition, and it wasn't exciting for them. School rarely dovetailed with what was going on in their lives.

Wallace: Gifted children usually find drill and repetition very distasteful and they shouldn't be required to continue it after mastering a concept or skill. However, many gifted children, my own included, need some reinforcement, particularly in math and foreign language. New material is not always absorbed instantly. Sometimes curriculum compacting goes too quickly and leaves students in the dust. We want our children to acquire knowledge, not just to accumulate information; that takes time and practice.

Walker: For my girls, what didn't work well for them was having teachers who required everyone to be on the same page at the same time.

Corash: In teaching gifted kids, plugging in theories or practices that sound good or are currently accepted doesn't always work. Something that doesn't work for Kid A might be terrific for Kid B. We have to pay attention to individual differences, and not just learning styles. Using Gardner's multiple intelligences as a base, we have to look *within* particular learning styles to get to real distinctions that make such enormous differences to each individual.

The conclusion of this two-part series of interviews will appear in the next issue of ***Understanding Our Gifted***.

Above and Beyond

Process Over Product

In *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide*, kids are asked to list their "gripes" — complaints they have about being gifted. One of these gripes is that "Parents and teachers expect [them] to be perfect; to 'do [their] best' *all* the time." *"Just do your best."* Such an easy direction to give. But for these children, who put more than enough pressure on themselves, this can be an incredibly difficult job to carry out.

Many gifted youngsters conclude that the important people in their lives really expect them to be able to do their best possible work on every task: every worksheet, homework assignment, quiz, test, paper, every single aspect of that major research project. Adults who believed the ultimate was required on every action of their work days, from brewing the office's best pot of morning coffee to organizing a meeting that precisely meets the needs of all 10 participants, would be stressed to the max! Gifted students often believe that, because of the sky-high expectations of others, they will surely disappoint with any product that isn't perfect. These assumptions may actually generate negative and unproductive work habits, such as:

- Procrastination
- Poky progress in working through tasks in an attempt to make no errors
- Excessive crying as an expression of frustration that perfection seems unattainable
- Destroying products that are nearly done because they "aren't good enough"
- Incessantly asking adults, "Is this what you want? Is this okay?"

If a gifted child you know is exhibiting some or all of these characteristics, it may be helpful for you to switch your emphasis from "doing your best" to "giving your best effort." This subtle but helpful change allows kids to concentrate more on the process than the product. It helps them learn that effort and outcomes are related; that is, the harder one works, the better the product or outcome will be. It also helps them learn that mistakes are okay as long as they're willing to put forth the effort necessary to forge ahead until satisfied that the product really reflects their best effort at a particular time. Most important, focusing on effort helps gifted kids understand that they are valuable people even on the days when perfection is elusive.

So, let's stop displaying only their "best work" and refrain from sending a message that a less-than-perfect report card is cause for dismay. Let's be sure our kids hear us bragging more about their hard work and dedicated effort than a perfect product. And let's encourage them to spend some time learning something that doesn't come easily to them, so that they can share the experience of true struggle.

REFERENCE

Galbraith, Judy. (1983). *The gifted kids survival guide*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Susan Winebrenner, from Illinois, presents workshops on a variety of topics, but her first love is teaching gifted children. She is the author of ***Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.***

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For parents, teachers and non-profit groups...as space permits.

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April 19-20, 1996, **Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education,** Harrisburg. Jay S. Brown (717)992-5410-after 4 p.m.

May 4-5, 1996, **Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children,** Cambridge, MA. Meg Swoboda (207)767-6121.

May 10-11, 1996, **Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education,** Lansing. Pat Forcier (810)659-4298-after 5 p.m.

Next Issue:

Global Connections for Gifted Students

Barbara Clark
Richard E. Shope III

Interact!

...a forum for discussion (See page 6)

When a gifted child enters school, parents need to accept and support with a smile their child's often strange, but creative art, stories, poems, plans, ideas, projects, etc. My experience has taught me that parents are the first line of encouragement and defense for children with non-traditional views. While teachers, social workers, principals and other parents do sometimes appreciate a gifted child's contribution, they are also often concerned that perhaps something is wrong or "not normal." So when kids bring home a painted pony with a gunshot wound or create a nutcracker which represents Elvis, just be pleased that creative sparks are alive and hot in your child. We, as parents, are the keepers of the flame until they develop and are able to do it on their own.

Ann Gusfield
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Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

May/June, 1996

Volume 8, Issue 5

Educating Gifted Children for Global Involvement

Barbara Clark

For decades educators have suggested the need for global awareness and understanding. Boyer (cited in King, 1985) suggested that curriculum affirm both our independence and our interdependence globally. Cultural sensitivity is taught in courses for teachers and infused in textbooks and classrooms around our country, while multicultural issues have become topics for conferences, articles and political platforms. Many of us have expressed this concern, taken these courses and been involved in such conferences, and yet there remains a deeper, more important level of understanding that many have never shared and even fewer have understood. *There is an enormous difference between multicultural awareness and meaningful global education.*

Many schools meet their perceived obligation to bring students multicultural awareness by providing opportunities for them to engage in the customs of the people of countries considered most important to their population. For example, in California, Mexican and Chinese customs enrich most classrooms, although many expand

(Continued on page 9)

INSIDE

FOCUS ON:

Global Connections for Gifted Students

Highlight
Double Duty
Interviews from the Field 17

Tactics
Sally M. Todd 3

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 4

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 5

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 7

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 16

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 19

From Wisdom to Innocence: Passing on the Knowledge of the Night Sky

Richard Shope

Bright colors in the sand signify the world and the stars that surround it. The seeker of wisdom draws delicate lines, then scoops the sand and pours it back over itself, colors blending, returning them to the earth from which they came.

Bright colors on the graphics display monitor signify the planet and the stars that surround it. The seeker of wisdom drags digitized pixels across the screen, enhancing the image for the Internet, then closes the file, colors blending, returning them to the database from which they came—earthbound messages that traveled through space from an instrument sent there from here.

Our lives spring out of the earth. Our eyes lift up to the stars beyond. Our minds expand beyond the brimming boundaries to discover more, which we draw deeply within ourselves to construct an ever truer picture. We express our experience somehow, in a song, a gesture, a whisper of love, an action of living, a scientific theory—until we, like the colors of the sand, are poured

(Continued on page 12)

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Understanding Our Gifted (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by **Open Space Communications, Inc.**, P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268. Subscriptions are $35 for 1 year (6 issues); Institutions $40. International subscriptions are $47 U.S. funds; International institutions $55. Back issues $8; International $10. Third class postage paid at Boulder, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to ***Understanding Our Gifted***, 1900 Folsom, Suite 108, Boulder, CO 80302, eight weeks before moving. Material in ***Understanding Our Gifted*** may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright 1995, **Open Space Communications, Inc.** All rights reserved. (303)444-7020/FAX (303)545-6505, 1-800-494-6178.

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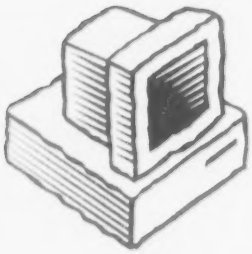
Between the Lines



*Global Education....*Yet another short-lived buzzword in educational circles? Definitely not.

Today's children will be meaningfully and personally involved in a world community much earlier in their lives than were the generations of their parents and certainly their grandparents. And what **gifted** young people will bring to and gain from such unlimited horizons could only— and sadly— be restricted by our own lack of vision in our commitment to global education.

Barbara Clark, in this issue's lead article, describes the difference in our schools between a surface awareness of customs of people in other countries, and a more meaningful study of global issues for children "who think in depth, with intensity, empathy, early concern for moral values, and sensitivity to fairness, justice and humanity's needs..." Clark states that gifted children "must be helped to understand global issues at depths much greater than the more superficial ones of multicultural awareness."

And not surprisingly this issue's theme of global connections carries us beyond the confines of Planet Earth. Richard Shope, our other featured author, writes about a world community in terms of the teaching of space science, hoping to "inspire a healthy self-awareness, a culturally-rich global awareness and a science-literate *cosmic* awareness, interpersonal, intercultural, intergalactic in scope."

We welcome Sally Todd, our guest Tactics writer. We also express continuing appreciation to our regular columnists for presenting, in each issue of ***Understanding Our Gifted,*** creative perspectives to a diverse readership of parents, teachers, administrators, health professionals and the general community.

D.K.

Tactics

THE JIGSAW
A Strategy for Enhancing Global Awareness

It has often and appropriately been stated that our world is shrinking all the time. It is obvious that through current travel technology and innovations we can travel around the globe in a relatively short period of time, and people move about the globe more freely. In dealing with diversity, the melting pot, cultural differences and adaptations we sometimes forget that people are at the heart of our concerns. A versatile collaborative activity, the JIGSAW can strengthen multicultural awareness and appreciation in any classroom.

As students join one of the JIGSAW groups of five or six, each is assigned a color which represents a topic to be studied. For example, if students were investigating holidays in different countries, one student in each Jigsaw Group might receive a red card to represent China; another, a yellow card to represent Spain; a third, perhaps an orange card to represent Mexico, etc. Students then regroup into Topic Groups by color, the red (China) group going to one designated area, the yellow (Spain) group assembling in another. In the Topic Groups participants may do research, participate in discussions, listen to a guest speaker, observe a demonstration—anything which prepares them to share information on the topic with members of their original Jigsaw Group.

When students return to their Jigsaw Group, they are given a specified time to share their findings. Group leaders make sure each member has an equal amount of time, as each Jigsaw team member is equally important to the group's learning experience. Students of all ability levels and

(Continued on page 6)

Sandra Berger

Surfing the Net

Personal Searches

I'm convinced! You can find anything on the Internet if you know how to use the available search tools. Two recent experiences have been interesting and exciting.

Last year *Understanding Our Gifted* hosted a reception at a Florida conference, and I wanted to bring some sort of food from my home state. So I searched the Internet for Virginia products and found fruitcakes made by the monks of the Holy Cross Abbey, with an order form on their Web site. I even received a personal e-mail message from the Abbey, thanking me and confirming my order. And so a fruitcake from Virginia appeared at a UOG reception!

My second experience occurred when I received a greeting card from a friend and fell in love with the picture on the front. The artist's name was on the back of the card, and once again I went to the Internet. This time it was a little harder, but eventually I found a Worldwide Web (WWW) home page that used the artist's work. The bottom of the home page listed a contact with an e-mail address. A quick e-mail message earned a reply the very next day. Yes, the artist was known, and his address, in a remote town in California, was sent to me. Since the artist did not have an e-mail address, I used plain old telephone service (known affectionately on the Net as POTS) to contact him. He turned out to be a very interesting person, and we had a wonderful conversation. Best of all, I now own the original painting of the photograph on the greeting card.

The WWW search tools are easy to use, and a few of my favorites are listed here. I hope you'll use them when you need hard-to-find information. If you have access only to gopher, please read about Jughead, Veronica and Archie, the gopher search tools, in *Understanding Our Gifted,7(2).*

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Altavista is my favorite because it allows you to conduct a search by stating the words you want to use, ranking them in order of priority and limiting the search by date (useful if you want to search for the newest information on a topic). The problem with Altavista is that it sometimes returns an unmanageable amount of information, so it takes some practice to be able to select terms that are specific enough to get really useful information. When I searched "gifted,"it returned 20,000 matches, so I needed to be more specific. Altavista also allows "advanced queries," which means you can use operative terms such as **and**, **or**, **not** and **near**. If all this sounds strange, send for *ERIC Digest #523* which explains searching terms in user-friendly language. Just send me an e-mail message.

To demonstrate the other search tools, let's search the term "gifted." Most people enjoy using YAHOO because this tool provides links to categories that you can see on your screen. For example, if you are looking for resources in psychology, just click on it. When I used Yahoo to search "gifted," I received 53 matches in groups of 25. So this database is somewhat limited in its scope. The World Wide Web Worm returned 5 matches and a suggestion that I search with "a sharper key word." Webcrawler found 625 documents and returned them in groups of 25. Lycos found 3246 documents, and returned them in groups of 10. Each one of these engines allows you to click on the documents that have been returned, but exploring lots of documents can be tedious. So use your creative problem-solving ability to select some specific terms, and go exploring. You might even find a Virginia fruitcake or a new artist!

See you on the Net.
sberger@inet.ed.gov

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

Sandra Berger is the Information Specialist for Gifted Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education in Reston, Virginia. She is the author of ***College Planning for Gifted Students.***

Laura Goodman

ParentSpace

The Long and Winding Road

Not long ago I sat with two moms as they recounted the details of their gifted children's identification process.

"We're so glad to finally have it all figured out!" exclaimed Eli's mother upon finishing her story. Through the initial few months of 1st grade she and her husband had watched their bright, energetic little boy, whose curiosity and desire to learn about his world had always seemed boundless, turn sullen and sour. Eli hated school, he told anyone who'd listen, and was known there not as smart and capable but as a terror and troublemaker. His teacher had hinted at some possibly serious social/behavioral problems and suggested counseling. The psychologist they consulted recommended beginning with a psychometric assessment and didn't seem surprised when Eli, the terror of 1st grade, scored 152 on the WISC-R. "Poor guy was bored stiff," she said, "and acting out, as they put it. Now they're hooking him up with the GT Resource person and he's going to 3rd grade for math." She shrugged, looking both relieved and incredulous. "We always knew he was smart, but..."

"We knew all along Britta wasn't a typical preschooler," the other mom said. "Seemed like she was born with letters and numbers in her head, and she could read anything by the time she turned 4." But in kindergarten this little girl was showing none of her advanced abilities. She was happy to sit alongside her classmates and do letter-of-the-week projects while blasting through Laura Ingalls Wilder at home. "It killed us to see that! I know her teacher thought we were crazy, but we had her tested anyway." Britta's scores placed her in the highly gifted range; her public school has since proposed that she skip 1st grade. "We're glad to have it figured out, too," she said, nodding to Eli's mom. "It's a big weight off."

I smiled, nodded and bit my tongue. Remembering how good relief and resolution felt, I recalled our myriad of initial concerns and questions and the professionals who were so, well, professional as they offered us their findings on our small, enigmatic son. We read their numbers, heard their words and felt competently oriented by those answers, as if IQ scores, personality inventories and learning style profiles explained everything. Without articulating it, I think we felt we'd arrived at our journey's destination, an informed base of operations from which to proceed. What we didn't understand was that those questions and their answers weren't the destination at all; rather, they represented only another, albeit highly significant, step on the winding and bumpy road of one little boy's unusual life.

I listened to the two satisfied moms speak of denouement, heard the familiar ring of their implicit belief that things were settled, questions answered. The pattern is similar in lots of families. Those first answers suffice until they're no longer adequate to answer the new questions they spawn, meta-questions about the lives of gifted children. Despite how out of the ordinary these kids are, how do we consistently preserve normalcy in their lives, help them stay even-keeled as they navigate the often tempestuous waters of friendships and school and living in a world in which they are out of sync intellectually, emotionally, developmentally? In parenting such children, too often and too soon it seems we find ourselves lost again and go looking for new and more penetrating answers.

If we can just find the right _____, then things will smooth out. (Fill in the blank here with your own end-all answer: *intellectual-peer playgroup, teacher, mentor, challenge level, whatever.*) Mine was *school;* I was sure if I found the right school fit for our son, then we would have arrived at that longed-for comfortable destination where the rule, rather than the exception, would be smoothness. Guess what? I found the right school and it's great, but our bumpy trip's not over. It took many rounds of questions-and-answers until I finally understood that the journey is perpetual and perpetually changing, with some stretches of the road smoother than others.

With the moms that day, I wondered but didn't say, what if Eli's anti-school attitude isn't changed by the offerings of the Resource person and a daily junket into multiplication and division? What if Britta's grade skip isn't the necessary catalyst in getting

(Continued on next page)

ParentSpace

Continued from page 5

her to use that powerful young mind? At that point would they have believed my observation that IQ scores aren't much more than legends on a map and that professional recommendations often provide helpful arrows and directional indicators but aren't enough to answer every question, let alone the questions about the questions. Certainly we need to identify as many landmarks as possible in such uneven and unfamiliar terrain, but ultimate answers come from the same place these kids did: the insides of their parents. For my money, that's where to look for the best directions and the most profound answers.

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Interact!

....a forum for discussion of what is important in the lives of gifted children and those who live and work with them. Share your views and opinions, your successes and frustrations, your expertise and your dreams.

Include your name and address; if your correspondence is published we will mention your name and state or country, unless you specify otherwise.
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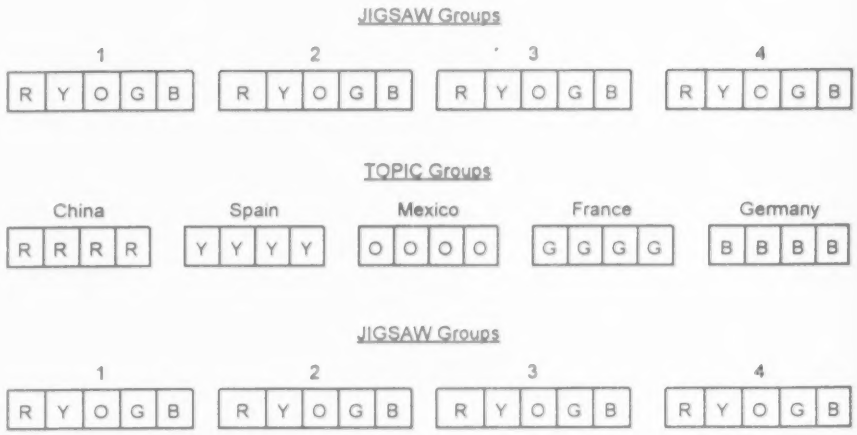
(See page 7)

The Jigsaw

Continued from page 3

cultures can be successful at sharing, as all will have received adequate preparation in their topic groups.



Opportunities to learn, to teach and to share cut across cultural and national boundaries. Through cooperation and sharing we learn to be companions in a global community.

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Coming Attractions in

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Gloria Frender

Learning To Learn

Attacking Assignments and Vocabulary

I get the idea, but I don't know where to start!

Familiar? All of us have shared that lament at some time in our learning process. Work is easy when things fall into place because of natural interest and excitement or a base of background information about the subject matter. It's more difficult, however, when the information is new and challenging and/or when the subject is not of particular interest. Many gifted students lack skills in learning how to attack new assignments or systematically learn vocabulary. Applying the following on-going strategies across all content areas will make them a solid part of routine study habits.

• ATTACKING AN ASSIGNMENT

This process may seem somewhat time consuming at first, but, as it becomes habit, it will save a great deal of time and frustration. The more it's practiced, the more naturally organized and quick-thinking the mind will become.

1. Skim the entire assignment.
Do I have an overall idea of what is to be completed?

2. Relate previous knowledge.
What do I already know about this?

3. Read the directions twice.
Do I really understand what is being asked or what I'm supposed to do?

4. Decide the purpose of the assignment.
What am I supposed to learn? How and why is this useful information?

5. Decide the outcome.
What should be the final product? What will be the format?

6. Decide on and adapt the appropriate learning modality.
What kind of audio, visual or kinesthetic strategies are asked for? Is this a left- or right-brain activity? How can I adapt my dominant learning strategy to the assignment?

7. Choose mnemonic devices.
What is the best strategy to apply in order to memorize this material?

8. Gather needed materials.
What materials do I need to complete this assignment?

9. Determine the sequence.
Where should I begin? What's the best sequence?

10. Do the assignment.
Do I intend to learn this information?

11. Review.
Could I teach this to someone else?

The following charts and examples are great tools for keeping an organized and thorough list of content-related vocabulary words and concepts. Keep up with new vocabulary and information by routinely adding daily entries during study time and use them as a study guide for review. Research reveals that "loading" information into your mind in small, organized units over a consistently spaced period of time is the best way to learn. Use one chart per class. Set a specific time during your last study time of the week to update the Weekly Review chart.

(Continued on next page)

Interact! ...a forum for discussion

We appreciate all your responses to this column and will print as many diverse viewpoints as we have room. Although we may not agree with every comment, we are committed to giving our readers the opportunity to express concerns and to **Interact!** (See page 6.)

*I suppose my feelings can be best expressed with the question, "Why, in the face of ample proof that gifted kids are not well served by public schools, do you **(Understanding Our Gifted)** continue to insist upon parents bending over backwards to work hand-in-glove with teachers and school administrators?" I feel you do a great disservice to parents of gifted kids—and, therefore, to the kids themselves—by all the emphasis placed, in every issue, on trying to politely wrangle an appropriate education out of public schools. ...Public schools don't serve **average** kids even moderately well, and when it comes to gifted kids, they fail abysmally. ...[S]tudy after study has proved that public education is failing America's kids in every way. So why all the emphasis on working with a system that isn't working?*

...We need a significantly different approach to education—We must reinvent education for the 21st century. Merely waffling between pull-out programs and "enrichment" in the classroom is a complete waste of time for the kids, the teachers, the parents, the administration.

Holly J. Shaltz
Fort Hood, TX
Parent of 3 Gifted Children

Learning to Learn

Continued from page 7

• STUDY SMART VOCABULARY

Vocabulary Word	Pronun-ciation	My Definition	Dictionary Definition	Sentence	Related Concepts
baleen 13 (write text page)	bə -len'	Strainer in mouth used as filter	Stiff, flexible substance growing from upper jaw of certain whales	The baleen is used to catch plankton.	hump-back, fin, blue whales

• WEEKLY REVIEW

Course Title	Main Topics Covered	New Vocabulary	I Learned:	Questions I Have:
Geology/ Science	rock types	igneous sedimentary metamorphic strata	igneous = volcanic sedimentary = deposited metamorphic = altered by heat	Are fossils only in sedimentary? What's the difference between igneous and metamorphic?

Remember to apply these highly successful strategies to train your brain and make learning more meaningful.

Few things are impossible to diligence and skill.
Samuel Johnson

Gloria Frender, an Educational Consultant from Colorado, has taught elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary and is the mother of two gifted children. She is the author of ***Learning to Learn*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success.***

Global Education

Continued from page 1

to include far more. Students read about traditions of the people of these countries, eat their foods, celebrate their holidays and dress in their native costumes. This brings an awareness of the customs' look and feel but does not bring an understanding of the people, their values, their concerns and, most importantly, their view of our world. While this may be appropriate for most children, for those who think in depth, with intensity, empathy, early concern for moral values, and sensitivity to fairness, justice and humanity's needs — our gifted children — multicultural awareness is not enough. Characteristics common to gifted learners make them an especially logical group for meaningful study of global issues. These students have a potential for profound ethical concern and insight, a heightened sense of altruism, ability to deal with complex relationships and multidisciplinarity, an affinity for focusing on real problems and a creative sense of problem solving. Passow (1988) urged the study of global education as an imperative for gifted students because of their unusual potential for intellectual initiative, creativity, critical thinking, social responsibility, empathy and leadership. Because their level of concern is so much greater and their level of understanding so much more complex, the learning experience of gifted children must include opportunities to explore the issues confronting the people of the world and the perspectives and beliefs that shape their actions. With a view to their participation and sharing in the leadership of our global community, they must be helped to understand global issues at depths much greater than the more superficial ones of multicultural awareness.

Global Education

As an educational movement, global education is over three decades old. Its roots are in international studies, which includes the study of nations, geographic areas, cultures, international organizations and diplomacy. To this base global education added the study of connections linking individuals and peoples of the world, human values, global systems, global problems and issues, along with the history of contacts and interdependence among peoples, cultures and nations.

American students typically show a limited knowledge of other cultures, groups and nations and are found to be largely ethnocentric in their attitudes toward those who are different from themselves. In their experiences there now exist increased interaction among the cultures, more mobility and more rapid communication between and among all peoples of the world. How to use these conditions to enhance their lives must become a part of their education.

To implement a curriculum for global education we should consider:

- offering both courses and programs with an international focus
- infusing international issues in all courses
- system-wide global education planning that includes multicultural education and intercultural relations
- increasing incorporation of international perspectives in textbooks
- expanding study abroad and exchange programs.

Self-actualization is but one goal of gifted education: self-actualization in service to humankind is the twin goal. To achieve these goals, we need persons who are caring, compassionate, conscientious, committed and involved and who understand what giftedness means and what obligations to self and society being gifted places on them. (Passow, p. 15)

Any group of people who share a common value structure, belief system, language and/or world view may be said to be a cultural group. Cultural heritage is learned and is not innately based on the culture in which a person is born. "Culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves in society" (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990, p. 32). Rather than being restricted to ethnic and racial heritage, cultural identity is influenced by religion, gender, age, socioeconomic level, primary language, geographical region, disabilities and/or any other exceptional conditions. We are all members of more than one culture, each with its own unique values, beliefs and world view. It is the integration of these influences that result in the complexity of each human being. This is the level of understanding global education must pursue, and it is this complexity that makes the pursuit so appropriate for gifted learners.

Too often lessons in multicultural awareness are reduced to exposure to racial and ethnic customs. As culture includes far more than race and ethnic influences, real understanding of the world's

(Continued on next page)

Global Education

Continued from page 9

people will only come from study at a much deeper level. The values, beliefs and world view of all areas of influence must be the essence of our study.

Examples of the Impact of Differing Values and Beliefs

Some examples will help illustrate the difference between multicultural awareness and global education.

Example: The problem facing all teachers of the African town was the enormous need of black tribal group children for education, especially skills and strategies that would allow them to become self-sufficient, self-supporting, knowledgeable and responsible citizens of the country. Teachers had determined that the younger they could reach children, the more effective they would be in teaching these skills. Tribal custom was to train children to obey the tribal leader without question under all circumstances. In this system there was no need for decision-making or critical-thinking skills, values that the teachers strongly held. Everything children learned would be limited or enhanced by the basic beliefs or values they had been taught. Teaching them to be questioning, critical and self-sufficient would directly oppose the teachings from their homes; yet, as society was changing, the children needed these very skills. How could this dilemma between values of urban-today and rural-yesterday be resolved? Are any of the children we teach similarly conflicted?

Example: An English visitor to a small kingdom in southeastern Asia was the guest of a member of the royal family. The visitor observed that questions were never allowed in the presence of the royal host who also always dictated where everyone was to go and what should be done, seemingly with no concern for individual wishes or preferences. Those who consulted with the royal host, among them professors from the university and highly accomplished professionals and artists, were obliged to keep their heads always at a lower height, a custom which often meant crawling into the presence of the royal host. This was also true for those who served the royal host at dinnertime, crawling in bearing carefully balanced hot dishes. This was obviously very uncomfortable, although it was always done with quiet grace and dignity. The visitor's values included independence of thought, the right and obligation to inquire and understand, equality and human dignity; these were in direct opposition to the values of the royal host. As the days went by the visitor's sense of dignity, humane treatment and equality were highly offended each time she witnessed these procedures. Finally, in private one evening she confronted a lady-in-waiting and asked why she allowed herself to be used in this way, pointing out that the royal host was never pleased with the efforts and, indeed, was always demanding and critical. The lovely young woman smiled kindly and told the visitor, "It is my honor to be chosen to be in her presence. To be allowed to serve her is a very great honor. I am very good at it and I do it beautifully. She knows and is proud of me. She only comments to make me even better. This is a blessing." The visitor thought a long time about what the lady had said and came to understand that it was her own values that made the lady's actions seem undignified. It was her own values and not those of the natives that demeaned the act and the actors. In their eyes they were indeed in the presence of ancient wisdom and the recreation of honor and blessings. It was a wonderful lesson in understanding the cultural values of others and honoring another view of life.

In our own lives we can find examples of similar, perhaps even more subtle, lessons on honoring the values of others. However, when our children begin living and working beyond our families and schools and moving into the world community, these lessons will be far more conflicting, more extreme and, unless we give them the skills to be open and understanding, more damaging to their goals and visions. Even such a seemingly simple task as introducing parliamentary procedures into an international meeting can be fraught with problems. When some nations involved do not operate within a parliamentary framework, their representatives may not see the need for wasting time with voting and demand that the participants be told what will be done rather than participate in decision making. Negotiating with colleagues from other nations on the organization of an international conference can bring

(Continued on next page)

Global Education

Continued from page 10

unexpected conflict regarding such seemingly routine things as how funds are to be raised and spent or what privileges are to be extended to whom. Values, beliefs and world views must be explored. Although these are examples of less consequence, ones of greater impact could be used from the world in which we live.

Understanding each other may involve not only honoring other views but may suggest integrating them for greater strength for all concerned. For example, an American, taking his first trip to mainland China was hosted by a friend from Taiwan. On several occasions they had discussed the beliefs and values of their countries, and each tried to understand the other's point of view. One day they strolled through Tienamin Square while quietly discussing the differences and similarities between the Communist Chinese ideas and those of the Chinese on Taiwan. As they were exploring the current problems between the two ideologies, the American asked what his friend thought the United States should be doing to speed up the process of changing mainland policy. His friend smiled and said that America was doing just the right thing to do very little. He hoped they would continue as it was a very helpful approach. To the American this seemed an odd comment and he said, "But if we aren't doing anything, how helpful can that be?"

"This is a difference between your country and mine. My country is very, very old. We have been a people for thousands of years and you have only been a people for a few hundred years. It is important that you bring to the world this new bright impatience to get things done. It is very energizing. We bring to the world a useful patience that allows things to work themselves out. Over the past several decades the mainland and Taiwan have both changed. We will continue to change. Each listens a little to the other. Each moves a little closer to the other. In time we will be more like each other than different and we will be together again. It may take many decades, but it will happen if no one moves too quickly or becomes impatient. That is why I say your country is doing the right thing when it does very little. The world needs each way of thinking."

This is a fine example of honoring and integrating two value systems. There is recognition of the importance of both world views to the future of the world community. If only all of us the world over, adults and children, could talk quietly to each other this deeply and really listen and understand! The world needs all ways of thinking. It is all too complicated for just one truth; perhaps there are many.

Global Education for the Children of the World

While we may not be able to provide experiences in distant places for our children, in our homes and classrooms we can create opportunities for them to experience each other, learn from each other and work together on global issues. Global education should focus on issues of importance to the children, their school and their community while teaching them to honor a variety of cultural values, beliefs and perspectives. By addressing real world problems, providing forums and audiences for expressing results, finding projects that can have true world impact and creating ways to recognize such concerns and results, we will give opportunities for much valuable learning. Gifted children can create results which may benefit their community, while learning from these experiences skills and strategies that will facilitate their involvement in the global community. As deeper issues of values, beliefs and perspectives are included, there will come far greater understanding, empathy and caring for all humanity both at home and abroad. We will then be truly preparing our gifted children for involvement in their world community.

For information on The World Council for Gifted & Talented Children, contact Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, Executive Administrator, World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, The Belin/Blank International Center, 210 Lindquist Center, Iowa City, IA 52242-1529.

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Night Sky

Continued from page 1

back into the earth from which we come, and younger minds, new seekers of wisdom, come into their own.

By night I squint my eyes to penetrate the mysteries of distant stars and planets. By day I look into the equally inscrutable gifted and talented faces of nearby children. I stretch out my arms, reaching for a connection between the two. I lean my hands across the keyboard of a NASA computer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, writing experimental curriculum, as I capture in silicate memory some innovative ways for teachers to bring space science to schoolchildren of all ages. Then I race across town to the real laboratory—the classroom—to put ideas into action, from the outer planets to the inner city, where it counts. When I step into the classroom, I ask students to stand up out of their seats, reach up and deep into their minds to stretch their imagination. Depending on the day, we may be measuring out the relative distances of the planets or working in teams to plan an interplanetary exploration mission.

When I teach about space science, I hope to inspire a healthy self-awareness, a culturally-rich global awareness and a science-literate *cosmic* awareness, interpersonal, intercultural, intergalactic in scope. Tall order? Yes, but it's what we *must* provide when we have 3rd graders asking *what's beyond the universe?* ....when we have 4th graders creating dramatic versions of the formation of the solar system, 5th graders designing credible details for new spacecraft, middle school, high school and first-year college students looking askance with skeptical eyes, jarred by the world's downside, vaguely hoping for a future worth striving for.

EDUCATING OUR COSMIC AWARENESS

Gifted young people sometimes think that what we teach them in science is somehow *set*, that no further unknowns challenge them to explore; too often they believe the main science concepts have already been discovered and what's left is just scientific mop-up. Missing from their equation is the thrill of real discovery and the awareness that real discoveries are taking place every day.

On the opening page of Gabriel Márquez Garcia's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970), a Gypsy named Melqu'ades comes through town hawking the marvels of magnetism. "Things have a life of their own!" he declares. From that tantalizing point of view, we can approach *things* in a new way. Here we are: the first generation in the history of humanity to see Earth from space. From space no political boundaries are drawn; Earth is something whole, part of a larger whole, a solar system, a galaxy, a universe. Space exploration is no longer a rivalry between competing ideologies, but an internationally cooperative endeavor that contributes to global awareness, intercultural appreciation and world-wide science literacy. The wonder and awe of the sheer scale of the night sky merge with scientific theory as we refine our understanding of what these *things* in the cosmos really are.

Kosmos, in the original Greek, refers to the beauty and order of the universe. Cosmology is the study of how we form our world view, our concept of how it all fits together. How do we help our young people attain their own sense of cosmic awareness?

The first step is to recapture the sense of wonder the sky offers to every one of us. Throughout human history, people everywhere have projected onto the heavens their most impassioned stories. Skywatching is one of the oldest human pastimes. For thousands of years people have observed and kept track of movements of the Sun, the nearby planets, the distant stars. We are now rediscovering highly complex systems of observation and applications of astronomical data from ancient traditions using only the technology of the naked eye. Even today, looking with our own eyes is the best place to start!

The main disadvantage in teaching space science in a school setting is that the night sky is not available as a direct daytime teaching tool; observation must be assigned as homework. However, this provides a perfect chance to engage the whole family.

As a family project, skywatching becomes an opportunity for generations to share experiences and learn together. By retracing the pathway of the ancient skywatchers, we discover our own innate abilities to observe, perceive and reason about the events of the sky. In recovering this important knowledge by direct experience, the technical and mathematical concepts become easier to grasp later on. I'll share with you some practical ways to make this happen.

(Continued on next page)

Night Sky

Continued from page 12

CREATE YOUR OWN PERSONAL OBSERVATORY

Your personal observatory is anywhere you are when you observe an event in the sky. To include every direction, you may need several vantage points, or you may be lucky enough to find that one vantage point offers you a wide expanse of sky. You are your own instrument: your eyes are natural binoculars, your mind attunes to patterns, your arms help you measure angles. Stand on your front porch or in your backyard, on the balcony of your apartment or look out a window; wherever a patch of sky is visible—you can observe!

Most important is returning again and again to your personal observatory to collect observations, watch for patterns and attempt to understand what the patterns imply. Once you and your children have spent time looking for yourselves, the literature of space science, astronomy and archaeoastronomy will open up to you because you'll know, from experience, what the experts are talking about.

Here's a scene I'd like to see played out by gifted families across the nation: It's after dark, early evening. You, the wise parent, make some popcorn or hot chocolate, turn off the TV or other distracting electronic devices and announce to your children that there's a special show you want them to see, outside. Over all objections, you stand firm. Turn off the porch light and step outside to find a comfortable spot free of the direct glare of nearby lights. Have everyone take a deep breath and look up. *Ta-Da! The stars!* Tell them to just look. In the city? Can't see hundreds, but only a few dozen? *Keep looking.* Can't name a constellation? *Don't worry!* Suggest that they look for patterns with their own eyes! *See what you see. Let your eyes wander across the expanse of night sky.* If they keep looking they'll start seeing more. Things not noticed at first will begin to stand out, like the different colors of stars. After about 10 or 15 minutes, eyes seem suddenly to grow in their ability to *see.*

Astronomical knowledge is based on *inference* from the evidence of the light we see. What we see of the stars and other celestial bodies reaches us through space, filtered through Earth's atmosphere. The light enters our eyes where it triggers retinal responses and alerts our mind to notice. All we really know about stars is the result of careful thought about the meaning of the light that we see. Looking at the evidence is a mix of creative inference and scientific intuition.

Images sent back to us from space represent tremendous feats of science and technology, yet the impulse to explore places like the Moon and Mars is mythic in proportion, driven by the human fascination with the possibility of visiting another world. Analysis going on now, with imaging teams poring over the radioed mosaics revealing the surface features of distant planets, requires distinctive methods of looking and seeing by each person involved.

Such activity was just as necessary in ancient times to conceive of calendars and construct architectural wonders aligned to astronomical events; this is the arena of *archaeoastronomy.*

Archaeo, as in archaeology, means ancient. *Astronomy* is the study of events in the sky: the movements of stars, planets, the Sun and Moon. Together, these words combine to name a field of study which has opened up in the last thirty years: *the study of how ancient peoples watched the sky and what we can learn from them today.* Archaeological and anthropological evidence has shown us that ancient humankind took a deep interest in the events of the sky. They did so without the technology we take for granted in our own time.

Today we routinely send up space shuttles, probes, satellites and high-powered telescopes to explore our planetary neighborhood. We possess actual photographs of Earth from space. We have mapped the surface of Venus, Mars. We are piercing the atmospheres of Jupiter, Saturn, and we have plans to explore Pluto and beyond. Yet we often forget to use the living, breathing technology we are born with. Unless we take the time to observe and think with our own eyes, we risk missing an important connection between the sky and ourselves. We miss *seeing* the most basic astronomical events available to us, every day and every night.

HORIZON REFERENCE SYSTEM

Now that we're all together in our personal observatory, let's create a system of describing where things are with a little more detail.

The Horizon is where sky meets ground. The True Horizon is where the sky would meet the ground without anything in the way; for example, looking out from the shore of an ocean. Using

(Continued on next page)

Night Sky

Continued from page 13

your arms, describe a circle to represent the True Horizon looking from your personal observatory, in all directions, 360° around.

Azimuth: Notice what you see on the horizon from your personal observatory. Maybe there's a tree straight ahead, a telephone pole off to the side or the roof of the building across the way. Stand up and, looking into the direction that gives you your own favorite view of the night sky, point both arms outstretched straight ahead and call this 0°; keeping your left arm straight ahead, point your right arm directly to your right, forming a right angle, 90°; still keeping your left arm straight ahead, point your right arm directly back behind you, forming an angle of 180°; now return both arms pointing straight ahead. This time keep your right arm pointing straight ahead and point your left arm directly to your left, forming a right angle to the left, 270°; then sweeping both arms straight ahead to 360° which is the same as the 0° starting point. You have now marked off four cardinal directions of your own horizon reference system. Notice the landmarks, especially at the locations of your four main directions. These buildings, trees and other landmarks are your Horizon References. This measurement from 0° through 360° of the circle along the horizon is called the *azimuth.* You can *calibrate* your Horizon Reference System by realigning your directions to the four traditional cardinal directions: North, 0°; East, 90°; South 180°; and West, 270°.

Altitude: Now point straight up. This is the *zenith.* We can measure how far up an object is from the horizon. Notice if you point with one arm to the true horizon in any direction and point straight up to the zenith point, this forms a right angle, or 90°. This measurement from 0° at the horizon to 90° at the zenith is called the *altitude.* We can measure the angular altitude of any object in the night sky

With these two measurement concepts—azimuth, the position in relation to the horizon, and altitude, the position up from the horizon to the zenith—you can refer to any position in the sky.

COLLECT A SERIES OF OBSERVATIONS

You now embody a scientific instrument that can help you keep track of what you see and where you see it for any particular time and place. Use your arms to point at the star that interests you. By looking to see the horizon reference directly below, you have the azimuth reading. By estimating the angle formed from the horizon going up, you have the altitude. In a field notebook, you can jot down the azimuth and altitude readings along with the data, time and place of each observation, a drawing and description of what you see.

If you see a star straight ahead and up about halfway, now you can say, look, there, at 0° azimuth and 45° altitude. Or there's Venus at about 290° Azimuth and about 30° Altitude. You can watch the same object from night to night at the same time and notice the gradual shift in position as Earth wends its way around the Sun or notice how stars shift position throughout the night as Earth rotates.

EXPRESS PATTERNS OF STARS OBSERVED

Have youngsters draw arrangements they see, connecting the dots or otherwise illustrating so that others may share in imaginative discoveries. It isn't necessary to know about star constellations at the outset to look and learn from them. The first step is just to look and let the looking have its effect. Any group of interesting stars will do; it may be a well-known constellation or a group of stars whose arrangement is reminiscent of a particular shape, image or idea. Suggest that children look for patterns, groups of stars that seem to form shapes as imagination tries to make them into pictures, like watching cloud forms pass overhead on a summer day. Connect the dots into meaningful figures and encourage them to tell what they see and what it makes them imagine. Perhaps they might make up and then act out a mythical story about a constellation invented from simply observing.

In our scientific age we too often consider mythic images as vestigial relics, valued solely for their literary or historical interest. Yet the names we accept today for stars, planets and constellations are based on Greek, Roman, Arabic and European science and mythology. The exercise of constructing our own cosmic vision in the sky engages us in the very process that ancients and moderns alike share in common: to learn about space is to learn about ourselves as well.

All technology is an extension of our bodies and our sensibilities. A pair of binoculars, a telescope, a telerobotic camera, all are extensions of our starting place—

(Continued on next page)

Night Sky

Continued from page 14

our own eyes. Once we begin to look, we see patterns. We can then think more clearly about what we read in print (No, Mars is not criss-crossed with canals built by Martians.) and what we hear on the nightly news (Yes, Pluto is *still* a planet.), as well as what we learn from the archaeological findings about the ancient skywatchers, whose medicine wheels, megaliths and petroglyphs still beckon to us to look and see. Most cultures develop gifts and talents of specific individuals to watch the events of the sky for both scientific and sacred reasons, to tell when to plant crops and when to hold festival celebrations. The ancient skywatcher was often a shaman—priest, healer, teacher, storyteller, astronomer and scientist. The ancient skywatchers were highly respected, trained observers. Ingenious strategies were devised to encode astronomical data and put it into forms that could be memorized and passed on. Traditions were carried orally in stories, poems and songs; kinesthetically in dances and mimes; visually in drawings, bark writings, sand paintings and petroglyphs; architecturally in medicine wheels, calendar stones, megaliths and pyramids. In our era of computers, we are now rediscovering that these traditions often obtained highly accurate information based on careful long-term observations and complex calculations. We are able to take such calculations much further, developing sequencing for interplanetary space flight, creating computer models of complex scientific theories of how the solar system formed. As we walk the pathways of the ancient skywatchers, we learn to look through their eyes, considering what they saw. In the mix of old and new perspectives we form our own science-literate relationship with the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon, the galaxy and the universe we live in.

Meanwhile, if you've taken time to enrich your life, and the lives of your children, by creating your own personal observatory and collecting observations, you'll be participating in these great events—from *Voyager* to Pluto, from the Shoemaker-Levy Comet striking Jupiter to the appearance of Comet Hyakutake, from astronauts living and working in orbit to humans landing on Mars—sharing the wisdom and passing it on. Our children will come to understand that when the whole galaxy is their neighborhood, they walk with a minds-on, cosmic awareness that can keep them sensible when things get tough on their own streets.

What we begin in school as a science class, bringing in the fundamentals of physics, astronomy, mathematics, then relating mythology, art and the roots of cosmology, must be extended as a truly *familiar* experience on the home front. It is enough being together for a while, looking out from our personal observatories, from wisdom to innocence, all the way to the stars...and back!

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Creative Ventures

Quilts, Part III

Problem Solving

Ingenious problem solvers have utilized quilts in search of solutions. Drawn from American history, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (1993, New York: Alfred A. Knopf) is Deborah Hopkinson's remarkable story of a young slave girl. Clara collects directions and descriptions of landmarks from slaves new to her plantation as well as from those who failed trying to escape. From her training as a seamstress, she transforms this information into decorative symbols which she sews into a quilt. This patchwork creation then serves as a map to guide slaves on their way North to the Underground Railroad, Canada and freedom. Clara memorizes the map too, for her own family's journey to freedom and leaves her quilt behind as a road map for other slaves. James Ransome's illustrations, including a representation of the freedom quilt in the end pages, are superb.

Mary E. Lyons presents an illustrated biography of another former slave in *Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers* (1993, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons). Young readers meet Harriet Powers, who was born a slave. After raising nine children, this devout Christian woman created two magnificent story quilts, now housed in the Smithsonian Institution and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which portray biblical people and events.

Caldecott-honor medalist Faith Ringgold is a contemporary artist who combines fictional narrative, autobiography and quilt making into a whole in order to tell the story of Cassie Louise Lightfoot. *Tar Beach* (1991, New York: Crown) is the fantastic tale of a little girl's reckoning of the world she inhabits and grows up in during the 1930s. Tar beach refers to the tar-papered rooftop of the apartment building where Cassie Louise lives. In end notes, the author-illustrator comments on racism and other factual elements in the story, as well as on the story quilt as art medium.

Quilting as art or a problem-solving medium is not exclusively feminine, and men and boys figure prominently in several quilt storybooks. In recent years, state-prize winners in quilt design and creation at both the Kansas and Colorado State Fairs have been men, including a cross-country truck driver who finds quilting a way to pass time constructively. Shirley Kurtz centers her family-fun quilt story *The Boy and The Quilt* (1991, Intercourse, PA: Good Books) on her experiences of teaching her two sons to make their own quilts.

Problem solving takes a delightful turn in Lisa Campbell Ernst's exuberantly told story *Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt* (1983, New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard). Sam Johnson is a farmer who discovers that he has a knack for quilting and consequently wants to join his wife's quilting club. When the members of the Rosedale Women's Quilting Club ridicule him and spurn his attempt to join them, Sam forms the Rosedale Men's Quilting Club and a battle of the sexes is on to determine which group will win the Best Quilt blue ribbon at the county fair. The ensuing romp is both funny and an example of first-rate creative problem solving.

An exemplary project involving young people in both quilting and problem solving is the ABC Quilt Project described in *Kids Making Quilts for Kids* (1992, Gualala, CA: The Quilt Digest Press). Building upon the tradition of quilting bees as forums for community discussion and shared productivity, Ellen Ahlgren created the project in 1988. With the help and supervision of teachers, parents and quilters, young people choose designs and fabrics, colors and shapes, and create crib quilts for babies and children under 6 who test positive for the HIV/AIDS virus, are born with alcohol or drug addiction or are abandoned. As young people make quilts, they discuss their concerns and fears about AIDS, drug addiction and alcohol abuse with other youths in a safe and informed atmosphere. Thus far, more than 30,000 crib quilts for children have been produced by youthful ABC Quilters.

Jerry Flack, President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, is the author of ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Double Duty

Interviews from the Field, Part II

Among educators, there are those with an added stake in gifted education, who, on a daily basis, do double duty in this field as both teachers and parents. ***Understanding Our Gifted*** *approached some of these individuals with questions about their dual roles, and we offer here some of their answers. Interviewees include* ***Marilyn Wallace****, administrator and past teacher at Creative Children's Academy in Palatine, IL; her sons are 6 and 12 and are students at CCA.* ***David Abbott*** *teaches 3rd/4th grade at Horizons Alternative, a Boulder, CO public K-8 school, and before that taught 7 years in a regular elementary classroom; his son is 13 and his daughter is 10.* ***Sally Walker,*** *Educational Consultant from IL, has 17 years teaching experience at various levels, including 7 years with gifted kindergartners, as well as working with parents of the gifted for 15 years; two of her three daughters are college seniors and the third has already graduated.* ***Pat Hollingsworth*** *brings over 30 years teaching experience to her job as both director and teacher at University School for Gifted Children, University of Tulsa (OK); she has a daughter, 28, and a son, 32.* ***Dennis Corash*** *is the principal of Roy Moore Elementary School in Silt, CO and has 18 years experience in regular and gifted classrooms; he has two daughters, 9 and 7, and a son, 11.*

UOG: What helps integrate the insatiable, achieving gifted student into a multi-ability classroom so that there is meaningful work and learning for all?

Corash: A lot can be done, but regular ed teachers must have special training. These students must have structure and be accountable. The biggest danger, as I see it, is that gifted kids need other gifted kids for social relationships and intellectual stimulation.

Abbott: I tried to serve some meat every day so that everyone would be nourished. It seems to me that if the environment is rich and if there is plenty of choice, kids will want to and will learn.

Wallace: At our school, we have a very wide range of abilities. IQ scores range from 125 to 225, but not all our students are consistently high achievers. They have spurts and lags in their cognitive development just as in their physical development. It's up to the teacher to know when a child is prepared to forge ahead or ready to rest and reflect. It isn't reasonable to expect a teacher to stimulate a child every moment of the day or to subject the child to that level of intensity.

Walker: What I've found helps is going with their interests and passions when possible. What worked best was maintaining an attitude of permitting individual students to do as much as they wanted and were able to do.

Hollingsworth: Open ended activities must be available. Bright kids need compacting activities where they test out of materials and work on projects that interest them. We need teaching methods that enrich the whole classroom.

UOG: What do you do with the gifted student who can, but won't, the underachiever?

Walker: With the underachieving gifted students, it's essential to back off and let logical consequences take over. A pattern of rescuing is not helpful. They need to learn how to "play the school game" and, as we always tried to teach our girls, they must be respectful of teachers. Kids might know more, but their teachers have lived in the world longer and deserve respect based on that.

Wallace: It's not always easy to decide when to push a child or when to pull back. As a parent, I try not to impose my need and desire to achieve on my children, particularly my older son. I can't drive him in areas that are interesting or important to *me*. I have to learn not to be upset when he doesn't adopt my sense of urgency about things. But, then, he has to learn that too.

Abbott: With these kids, the emotional component seems to be most important. If the academic setting is okay, you work on the social/emotional side. If the kid loses six months of schoolwork, it's no big deal if the other is being helped.

Hollingsworth: We must turn the responsibility back to the students. They must help choose their own rewards and consequences. Let time and process work together. Another method of dealing with underachievement is getting parents involved. Parent support is important. All the adults must get together and approach the problem together with a united front.

(Continued on next page)

Double Duty

Continued from page 17

Corash: Gifted kids are more like special education kids than their more typical peers. It's hard for them, no matter what. For underachieving gifted children, because of their being shot down too many times, boosting their self-esteem must be addressed first. Find out what turns them on, and go with that. Do a lot of hand-holding. It's essential that they become self-reliant self-advocates.

UOG: As a parent, with the benefits of your experience and unique dual position, what would you do differently if you had the chance to do it all again?

Hollingsworth: I would put the responsibility back on my children rather than hover and rescue. I'd help them see their problems as learning experiences they have to go through. Even with all the mistakes you make as a parent you find you have wonderful kids! The love and the caring come back to you.

Corash: Knowing what I know now . . . Well, I'd ... start my own school! And I'd listen better to my own children. All the advocacy we encourage parents to do, I'd do more of for my own children.

Wallace: I consider perfectionism to be one of the negative characteristics of giftedness. It brings with it much frustration and dissatisfaction. I try not to model that for my children, but I know it slips through. We strive at home to set realistic, age-appropriate goals.

Walker: I'd be a bigger advocate for my children. I'd write lots of positive notes affirming the good things teachers did, which would then give me the right to complain when necessary. I always remember one first day of school, 10 years ago now, when a mom of one of my students wanted me to have a good start to the day and the school year, so brought me coffee and a croissant. It was a wonderful way to start our teacher-parent relationship.

Abbott: I'd get my kids into an alternative school sooner, which is where they are now. The right place is so important. The hard part is the social/emotional piece, their confidence, ability to understand. I'd want to have more awareness earlier and get the kids involved in groups with kids more like themselves. And I'd take more time with them myself.

UOG: As a teacher of gifted students, what would be your Utopian school setting?

Abbott: One on one! Or, at least, a far greater proportion of talented adults to kids.

Wallace: I guess Creative Children's Academy comes closer to an educational Utopia than anything I've seen, but the school is young (14 years) and still developing a student profile and curriculum. We have come to realize that we can't meet the needs of all the gifted children who knock at our door. Our backbone is the gifted adults who work with the children. They are so bright, so intuitive, so committed to serving this special population. It is a privilege to support their work.

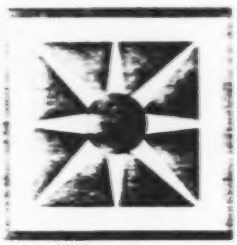
Hollingsworth: Of course my Utopian school is University School, where parents and teachers work together to teach kids to use their gifts in caring and responsible ways.

Walker: My Utopian school would not see color nor socio-economic divisions, focusing instead on students' talents and strengths. It would begin with preschool, and from there on up it would be interdisciplinary with flexible grade levels. Problems would be presented as future challenges. Kids would get work when they were ready for it, and we would teach to students' strengths and talents. Portfolios would be kept to document growth and best work.

Corash: My Utopian school would have a 12-to-1 teacher-student ratio, multi-age grades (three to four different ones to a classroom), have rooms large enough for big projects and small enough to have wheels. We'd go out into the world and *explore* and *do*. There would be a balance between acceleration and enrichment of new, different and enlightening experiences. And in it all, we would celebrate the strengths of children.

Above and Beyond

Toward Future Global Leadership



For many years, evidence from testing results has suggested that American students don't compare favorably to many foreign students on international tests of academic capabilities. Even when university placement tests are compared between countries, United States tests appear to be less rigorous than those from Japan, Germany and other countries (Viadero, 1996). Debates continue as to the reliability of such reports. One thing is certain, however: In most of the countries to which U.S. students are compared, at about age 12 the top 30-50% of students are "tracked" to secondary schools with more rigorous curricula. Test data from our country is misleading in that a much larger percentage of our students are tested, with those scores then compared against data from only the top half of students in other countries.

In those countries, the need for separate programs for "gifted" adolescents becomes less acute when the entire curriculum is more likely to challenge highly capable students. When we compare such situations in foreign schools to current U.S. practices of placing all students in mixed ability classes, we realize that American students capable of working at advanced levels often find themselves working at grade level or lower, in deference to the needs of students who find learning problematic or difficult. In this decade, in many school districts the per pupil expenditure for students with "exceptional educational needs" exceeds the expenditure for "regular education" students by thousands of dollars. If it is not elitist to provide financial and academic support to "inclusion" students, it cannot be elitist to provide academic support for students who need challenge beyond the regular curriculum.

The single most significant influence on any district's policy regarding the availability of classes designed to challenge students beyond regular grade-level expectations is the amount of parental pressure applied to local boards of education. In districts where parents of gifted students unite in advocating that their "exceptional" children are just as entitled to appropriate academic learning conditions as are other "exceptional, inclusion" students, accelerated class sections are likely to be retained. In districts where parents are shy about advocacy, accelerated classes disappear in the mistaken belief that ability grouping is bad for all students. Of course, research by Kulik and Kulik (1980), Rogers (1993) and others documents that unless gifted students are grouped with others of like ability and exposed to appropriately challenging curriculum, those students will become "normal" or "average" in alarmingly short periods of time as they seek ways to be more acceptable to their peers.

Advocates should take care not to ask for "special programs" for gifted students; rather advocacy should be based on the assumption that all students have a right to learn at a level that allows them to experience appropriate struggle and challenge. Crossing our fingers and hoping such outcomes will simply happen in mixed-ability classes is as sensible as assuming all kids of the same height or weight will have similar learning capabilities and needs.

If our American students are to compete in a global economy and keep the U.S. strong as a world power, they must be educated as well as or better than students of similar abilities in countries which will present the future economic and political challenges in our world.

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Next Issue:

Affective Needs

Dorothy Sisk
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Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

July/August, 1996

Volume 8, Issue 6

A Search For Meaning: Using Affective Education To Create A Pedagogy Of Relevance For Gifted Students

Dorothy A. Sisk

Now, more than at any other time in history, we need creative and intelligent leadership. As society becomes increasingly more complex, the need for truly meaningful education of gifted students is critical. Our most capable students need a pedagogy of relevance, one which provides high levels of both advanced cognitive and affective concepts and processes beyond what is normally offered through regular curriculum. Within this alternative framework, teachers would move away from a value-free rational approach to learning toward a transactional model between students and teachers. Morrison and Paul (1991) describe the transactional model as interaction with the unknown for the purpose of constructing meaning with emphasis on thinking processes. It is multidisciplinary student-centered learning, moving from whole to part and concept-based. Teachers function as catalysts for problem solving, and students play active roles which demonstrate respect for the idiosyncratic

(Continued on page 9)

INSIDE

FOCUS ON:
Affective Needs

Tactics
Cal Roberts 3

ParentSpace
Laura Goodman 5

Surfing the Net
Sandra Berger 6

Learning to Learn
Gloria Frender 8

Creative Ventures
Jerry Flack 16

Above and Beyond
Susan Winebrenner 17

Affective Needs of Culturally Diverse Students

Alexinia Y. Baldwin

Life is a comedy for those who think and a tragedy for those who feel.
Horace Walpole

The affective needs of individuals are inextricably tied to their emotional outlook or emotional quotient (EQ) and the perceptions of those with whom they interact. As Piechowski (1991) stated: *The intensity of emotional reactions, especially in children, may sometimes be difficult to understand, especially when they strike seemingly out of the blue and the child is strongly upset over "nothing." It requires considerable patience and knowledge of the child to see that the overreaction comes from the child's sensitivity and need for his or her own order of things to be preserved* (p. 289).

Children from culturally diverse backgrounds often experience a lack of supportive affective behavior and understanding in their school environments. Stereotypical behaviors such as cast down eyes, boisterousness or non-standard English serve to isolate the minority or economically disadvantaged

(Continued on page 14)

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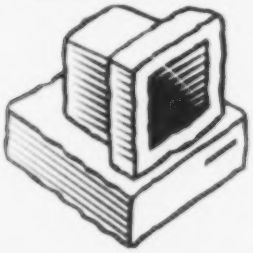
Between the Lines



As parents and teachers, we continually struggle to understand the complex social/emotional needs of gifted children, as well as their intense academic requirements. Is one area more important than the other? How do we decide—both at home and school— what to emphasize for these unique youngsters?

We would all do well to remember that parents have more flexibility to go with their gut feelings about what their children require to feel happy and fulfilled. School leaders, however, who are responsible for planning curriculum must base their decisions on the current budgetary situation, the status of U.S. education in the international arena and what is "politically correct" for a particular school district in a given period. Unfortunately, the constraints of reality may impede successful fulfillment of the needs of clients a school district is charged to serve.

In this issue, Dorothy Sisk discusses the combined sense of personal identity and academic direction in the gifted, and Alexinia Baldwin addresses affective needs of culturally diverse students. In Tactics, Cal Roberts provides a parent/writer/home educator view of bibliotherapy for gifted youngsters, and in ParentSpace Holly Shaltz shares her perspective as a homeschooling mom. Our competent columnists provide their own insights on a variety of topics relevant to raising and teaching gifted children.

What area is most important to you in understanding gifted children? Help us to understand your needs as parents and teachers of highly capable young people. What type of information do you find most useful? Your thoughtful communications continue to help us focus our efforts to provide you with a meaningful publication.

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D.K.

Tactics

Bibliotherapy

Cal Roberts

An uncomfortable distance can exist between the gifted child's sincere (and many times deeply philosophical) comments and queries and the reactions they elicit from the rest of the world. Their questions are often blunt, rough-hewn versions of those we still ask, and we can be taken off guard by the intensity and depth of the feelings our kids exhibit at such an early age.

Around the Thanksgiving table, all heads were bowed for the blessing when my young son blurted out, " Grandma murdered the turkey and I don't think *his* family is very thankful!" My son's confusion had come into embarrassing conflict with a hallowed cultural tradition. The faces at that table registered everything from humor to horror, and it was clear from the puzzled look on my toddler's face that he wasn't able to make sense of the cornucopia of reactions his comment received. He needed some concrete help.

Because his intense perfectionism would surely have been set off by a lecture about dinnertable manners, my follow-up on the Thanksgiving debacle consisted of a brief discussion of Grandma's feelings, followed by several weeks at the library researching food, eating customs and celebrations from around the world. At the time I had no idea that I was offering my son a form of bibliotherapy.

Bibliotherapy uses books as a springboard for further examination and discussion of issues and feelings. It can help children clarify complex or frightening ideas in a controlled context in which other stresses (such as a fuming grandmother) are minimized or absent. Many gifted kids have the uncanny ability to see what doesn't make sense in a situation but often lack the skills and life experience to navigate these moments without direct intervention. A good book can provide perspectives, insights and solutions that can be safely assimilated at home and then taken out to be practiced in the real world.

Book Selection

For youngsters who enjoy fiction, reading historical novels offers learning about differences and similarities in the ways humans have interacted throughout history. Ester Forbes' *Johnny Tremain* (1969, New York: Dell) remains a

(Continued on next page)

Bibliotherapy

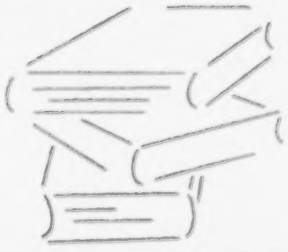
Continued from page 3

classic of this genre, providing a picture of the early days of the American Revolution through the life of a silversmith's apprentice who, although talented, pays a harsh price for his lack of social skills. The parent of an older child found reading a more contemporary classic, William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954, New York: Aeonian Press), with her son helped generate discussions about problematic peer relations in groups of children. In this way, difficult topics like death, natural disasters, war and peer relationships can be addressed head-on by giving young readers opportunities to identify with a book's characters or situations.

For readers who thirst for the cold, hard facts, nonfiction may represent the best approach. Nuances of teamwork, the value of individual differences and the struggle many gifted people have faced to maintain themselves as multifaceted surface through reading of the lives, both personal and professional, of men and women in all walks, historical and contemporary, inventors to firefighters and artists to astronauts. In her anthology *Women's Lives* (1993, New York: W.W. Norton), Phyllis Rose devotes each chapter to a girl or woman from all levels of society and corners of the globe, and what emerges is a sense of womanhood as a celebration of courage even in the face of poverty, prejudice and ignorance. *Edison: Inventing the Century* (1995, New York: Hyperion) by Neil Baldwin provides sophisticated readers with a unique glimpse into the life of "the father of modern technology." The book is a reminder of how little we know of the man behind the light bulb and how common this theme is in the lives of the gifted.

Many contemporary books for young people are written with the specific goal of providing information on a specific affective topic, such as divorce, the stepfamily, blended households etc. These books can help to break the ice, but proceed with caution: They can also have the opposite effect by bringing a delicate issue into sharper focus and causing a more sensitive child to shut down. In other areas, some fine candidates for bibliotherapy are found in the straightforward facts and opportunities provided for sibling exploration of feelings in Joanna Cole's *The New Baby at Your House* (1995, New York: William Morrow), the sharp perceptions of a young boy's living through World War II in Michael Foreman's *War Boy* (1990, New York: Arcade) and in Judith Vigna's *Nobody Wants A Nuclear War* (1996, Niles, IL: Albert Whitman), a book threaded with hope throughout, written on a topic that leaves many gifted young scientists, and others, feeling confused, helpless and terrified.

As with so many other areas of their lives, gifted kids can run into problems with asynchronous development. When their reading aptitude exceeds their level of emotional maturity, selecting books can become a real challenge. Parents, teachers and the youngsters themselves can have trouble finding appropriate books, particularly during the upper elementary and middle school years. Often it's difficult to find a librarian prepared to offer recommendations or booklists for gifted readers who desire complexity and depth but aren't quite ready for Dostoevsky.



Fortunately, annotated bibliographies are available and provide a single access point to a broad spectrum of book choices. *What Do Children Read Next? A Reader's Guide to Fiction For Children* (1994, Detroit: Gale Research), compiled by school librarian Cindy Colborn, offers multiple indexes to refine your search. Approximately 2000 titles are indexed by awards, time period, geographic area and subject, to name a few, and age ranges (for what they're worth) are provided for each book as well as a list of additional titles readers might enjoy. *The New York Times Parents Guide to the Best Books for Children* (1991, New York: Times Books) by Eden Ross Lipson, is another guide that separates titles by age range and includes a special-topic index covering areas such as adoption, religion and behavior problems. You're on your own, however, once your 8 year old is able to read adult fiction. At this point the best way to determine whether a title is appropriate is to read the book yourself.

Bibliotherapy is no substitute for real life experience; rather it's one of many strategies that can help gifted children make sense of the world and find their places in it.

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ParentSpace

With pleasure we welcome guest columnist ***Holly Shaltz****, whose life experiences have included working as a Russian linguist for the U.S. Army, La Leche League leader, spinner and weaver, Army-families support group leader, newsletter producer, along with being the mother, advocate for and educator of three gifted children. She lives with her family in Central Texas.* *L.G.*

Parenting in Isolation

Holly J. Shaltz

Isolation has been the defining characteristic of my parenting experience. I've had no real social, educational or emotional support in parenting my three children. As a career Army family, our frequent moves have certainly made things difficult, but the larger part of the problem comes, I've found, in the fact that my children are profoundly gifted (IQ over 180). Although I believe the numbers in this small population are greater than statistics suggest, it's still a pretty rare breed, as I discovered during the 1990 Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children conference.

I arrived there feeling very tentative, having no acquaintances, no friends to meet, only knowing it was a conference for "highly gifted" children. Going in, I knew my 11- and 8-year-old sons were very bright, based on IQ tests given at their school, but I had no frame of reference for understanding their scores. What was clear was that none of my friends understood what it was like living with these kids and that the school system was no help. Just two weeks earlier we'd begun homeschooling after finally accepting the system's proven inability to deal with the boys' academic and emotional needs and its outright statement that it could do nothing for them.

I walked into that conference, both fearful and hopeful, still assuming my boys were "average" gifted kids. The first thing I learned was that Jon's level of giftedness was as unusual in that conference of parents with highly gifted children as the highly gifted are in the general population. That was like having the rug yanked from under me, and it had been a very threadbare rug to begin with! Since I'd never found support for my "average" gifted kids, I thought, what on earth was I going to do with a profoundly gifted one? That was the first day.

The second day was worse. Jon, my middle child, had always been the obviously academic one, doing all the "traditional" gifted stuff like counting backwards from 10 before he was 2 and teaching himself to read before he was 4; in contrast, his older brother Christopher seemed average intellectually. More information shattered that cherished illusion. Already overwhelmed, I reacted with tears as several speakers spoke of the existence of like IQs in siblings of profoundly gifted children, and I realized I had not one but two at home. The isolation factor was compounding fast. In addition, I had to face the fact that because Christopher's potential had never been recognized, I'd have to somehow play catch-up with him, somehow convince him being gifted was OK and help him dig out from under years of submerging his wonderful intellect in his desire to behave as he thought the adults around him wanted. If I'd felt alone and adrift before, the pervasive isolation I felt after that conference was staggering as I realized just how different my boys were from other kids.

Then, as I came to understand more clearly the scope and depth of their gifts, I found I still didn't know what it all really meant in terms of the boys' potential or what I should do to help them reach it. I didn't find much help in library books, and still I had no friends or family who understood. Figuring out how to raise and educate such exceptional children has been scary business on this long, lonely road, and I know there are other parents traveling it too. I've learned to go with my gut feeling in making decisions, and usually that works, although it's still hard. But I *know* I make a difference in the lives of these children. Without homeschooling, they'd be twisted into caricatures of themselves by now, and I know that my willingness to accept them as more intelligent than I am has allowed them the freedom to move at their own, lightning-fast speed. I know my willingness to admit mistakes and imperfections has brought us closer together, far closer than I ever was to either of my own parents. Still I sorrow. Surely our lives could have been less rocky and more enriched, had there been some kind of support system.

Six years, as many moves and another baby later, I am as far as

(Continued on next page)

ParentSpace

Continued from page 5

ever from having a support network for parenting my kids, either as profoundly gifted individuals or as homeschoolers. Some support would have been nice: having opportunities to ask questions before things got out of hand, learning from the examples of others and, above all, having direct feedback. Interacting with parents of other profoundly gifted children, I might have learned about the drawbacks to extreme empathy in time to help Chris learn how to manage his in an emotionally healthy manner. There might have been someone to jolly me out of the dumps whenever Jon's insatiable need for knowledge got hard to bear. I might have learned what the boys' gifts really meant in today's world in time to be more assertive in their earlier school life. And though I wish it had been otherwise, the boys have known no other kids like themselves. So I've been their friends, their mentors, counselors, guides, coaches, you name it. At some point I've filled every role imaginable, because I've had to. My sole support has come in knowing they needed me and that I've been there for and with them. We have coped.

Still, the positive side of isolation has been very real to me. It's taught me I'm a much stronger, more resourceful person than I ever thought possible. I've learned to learn from my kids and that we can be friends — close friends. What I've learned the hard way will especially benefit my little girl in the years to come. If I hadn't found a positive side to all this, I could never have managed to raise functional kids, let alone remained more or less functional myself.

Not that my journey as parent is over — far from it. Christopher just turned 17, Jon will soon be 15 and Bethany turns 5 in the fall. I'm hoping the move we're planning for next year will be our last, thus giving me the opportunity, for the first time, to put down roots and keep friends for more than a couple years. Perhaps, finally, I'll be able to build a support system.

Laura Goodman is the mother of a gifted child, a fiction writer and editor, not necessarily in that order.

Interact!

...a forum for discussion of what is important in the lives of gifted children and those who live and work with them. Share your views and opinions, your successes and frustrations, your expertise and your dreams.

Include your name and address; if your correspondence is published we will mention your name and state or country, unless you specify otherwise.

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Surfing the Net

Sandra Berger

Do you hear words like "world wide web" and "home page," and wonder what they mean? Do the terms "listserv" and "URL" leave your mind boggled? Then it's time for you to get on-line. It's time to connect to and participate in the Internet, a worldwide network of computer networks that includes thousands of databases, discussion groups and files on every topic imaginable. If you're a "newbie," let's review some of the basics.

Where's the On-Ramp?
If you have a personal computer, a modem and communications software, the first step is to set up an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP). Possibilities range from getting a free account if you're a student, to signing up with a commercial on-line service that will charge either a flat monthly fee or an actual on-line usage fee. The most popular commercial vendors or ISPs are Prodigy, CompuServe, and America On-line (AOL). They provide full or partial access to the Internet in addition to reference services, publications, on-line chats, software, games and travel planning. But nowadays local companies

(Continued on next page)

Surfing the Net

Continued from page 6

are cropping up which may be more economical. Shop around. Ask friends, check the business section of the newspaper or drop into your local library. Ask vendors if they provide software, and see if you can negotiate a free trial period. I recently signed up with a commercial vendor and found that almost every time I used the service, my computer screen froze. After two weeks of inconvenience, I canceled my subscription.

Getting Started

Most people use the Internet for electronic mail. E-mail is like sending someone a letter, but you don't need paper, envelope or stamp. Your ISP will give you an e-mail address and instructions. The address consists of two parts, your log-on name or personal identification code and the Internet address for your network provider. My log-on is *sberger*, but lots of vendors use a combination of letters and numbers, or just numbers. My provider, the Department of Education, is *inet.ed.gov*. *Inet* is the name of the computer or server; *ed* is the department, and *gov* is the organization. The two parts are always joined by an @ sign, so my address is *sberger@inet.ed.gov*. Information that comes after the @ is usually separated by a period, pronounced "dot." If I subscribed to AOL, my address might look something like this:
sberger@aol.com. *Com* stands for commercial. Other addresses might end in *edu* (universities), *org* (organization), *mil* for U.S. military sites or the initials that indicate a different country, such as *ca* for Canada. Questions? Send me an e-mail message *sberger@inet.ed.gov* and I'll see if I can help.

Listservs

Once you have an e-mail address, you are ready to write to people all over the world. Finding someone's e-mail address is relatively simple, but the easiest way is to ask. If you find that you like this mode of communication and want to participate in an on-going discussion about topics that interest you, you might join one or more of the discussion groups or listservs.

Connecting with Others

Several groups discuss gifted children or gifted education. Some addresses are listed below.To subscribe to (or join) these listservs:

1. Send an e-mail message to the listserv ADDRESS (an electronic robot). For example, the listserv address for TAG-L is LISTSERV@VM1.NODAK.EDU (VM1 is vee-em-one)
2. Leave the subject line blank.
3. In the body of the message, type **only** the following:
Subscribe [list name] yourfirstname yourlastname
Subscribe TAG-L Sandra Berger
Use your real name, not the words "your first name" and "your last name." The robot will respond with information that you should keep, including directions for sending messages to the list.

GIFTEDNET-L
(gifted ed curriculum)
To subscribe to GiftedNet, send an email message to:
listserver@listserv.cc.wm.edu
Skip the Subject line, and on the first text line, type: Subscribe giftednet-l (yourfirstname yourlastname)

TAG-L
(general discussion of issues in gifted education)
To subscribe, send an email message to:
LISTSERV@VM1.NODAK.EDU
Skip the Subject line, and on the first text line, type: Subscribe TAG-L (yourfirstname yourlastname)

TAGFAM
(families of gifted children)
To subscribe, send an e-mail message to:
LISTSERV@SJUVM.BITNET
(or LISTSERV@SJUVM.STJOHNS.EDU)
Skip the Subject line, and on the first text line, type: Subscribe TAGFAM (yourfirstname yourlastname)
TAGFAM has its own home page: *http://www.access.digex.net/~king/tagfam.html*

Come on in. Surf's up, and the water's fine. If you see me, be sure to wave!

sberger@inet.ed.gov
CEC URL: *http://www.cec.sped.org*
ERIC URL: *http://www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm*

The ideas expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC or ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

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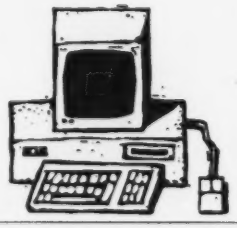

Learning To Learn

Be An Active Listener

Just as iron rusts from disuse, even so does inaction spoil the intellect.

Leonardo da Vinci

Listening and note-taking are two critical classroom survival skills. Without intentional, focused listening, taking accurate notes is impossible. Without effective class notes, learning and retention are greatly reduced.

We listen for a variety of reasons: appreciation (enjoyment and pleasure), information (instructions, details, lecture, new job) and understanding (process information, relate to own experiences, class discussions). All require active not passive minds for best learning.

Reasons Why We Don't Listen

- Input Overload

  One third of our "awake time" is spent listening. We can listen to many things at one time, but only one well.
- Brain Power

  The brain is capable of understanding speech at 600 words per minute; the average person speaks 100-140 words per minute. What do our minds do with all of the "leftover" time?
- Physical Noise

  Sounds in the environment cause interference. Physical surroundings are often uncomfortable, and fatigue is distracting.
- Personal Concerns

  Emotional problems/thoughts occupy the mind and block out auditory input.
- Talking Seems More Important
- Listening Skills Not Taught

  Listening skills are not continually/consistently practiced or modeled.
- "Tune In" Too Late

  Students do not listen from the start of the conversation, class or lecture.
- Not Listening Ahead

  Students do not process and remember or associate what is being said now.

Listening Skills — Overcoming Bad Habits

- "Set" your mind; intend to really listen from the very beginning.
- Listen to what is being said, not allowing your mind to wander.
- Clarify continually to yourself what is being said.
- Try to determine the speaker's pattern of talking and delivering information at the very beginning. This will help you anticipate what is coming next and set your mind to think in the same pattern. This is most difficult, yet most effective for your memory.
- Keep your mind active by taking notes. Set a goal for listening: quiz/test information, directions for projects, etc.
- Resist distractions (physical, emotional, mental). Sit at the front of the room whenever possible.
- Involve yourself; think of examples as the speaker talks, relating them to your own experiences.
- Listen very closely to introductory and concluding remarks/ideas.
- Pay attention to "speaker cues" that signal important information: voice (soft/loud, low/high, slow/fast) physical motions (pointing, listing items using fingers, stepping toward audience, raising arms with palms toward audience).
- Think of questions while listening; this helps to organize thoughts.
- Constantly try to link concepts and main ideas with details, as well as cause/effect and problem-solving techniques.
- Listen for what is *not* said as well as what *is*.
- Listen to class discussions carefully and make note of any points the speaker reinforces.
- Note any material that is repeated. Make hash marks in the margin.
- Always summarize the information before you leave class and again at home during study time. Rephrase it in your own words.

Apply these listening strategies and become an active listener. Make listening a real learning priority.

References

Frender, G. (1990). *Learning to learn: Strengthening study skills and brain power.* Nashville: Incentive Publications.

Gloria Frender, an Educational Consultant from Colorado, has taught elementary, middle, secondary and post secondary and is the mother of two gifted children. She is the author of ***Learning to Learn*** and ***Teaching for Learning Success.***

Search for Meaning

Continued from page 1

and complex nature of the learning process.

School instruction is usually organized around cognitive objectives, concepts and generalizations, with affective learning added on last. A teacher teaching about the American Civil War first concentrates on the factual and conceptual knowledge of the issues, ideologies, people and geography to be transmitted to students and only then sets about determining how to teach related values, feelings and sensitivities. The fact that affective education decisions come second in the academic planning process may send a message to teachers that affective education is of second-level importance. Yet it is very often the affective domain that engages gifted students in the passion of learning and builds the motivation to solve real problems. To motivate students, Maeroff (1996) recommends that schools link academic pursuits to the world that young people inhabit, a world replete with serious problems calling for ethical decision making.

Individual responsibility is a major component of the affective dimension of education and includes self-awareness, self-discipline and self-direction (Canfield and Siccone 1993). As students learn to do the right thing and to behave correctly according to cultural standards, Myers and Myers (1995) suggest that they study:

a. the values espoused by their culture and others, as well as their own personal value system
b. the feelings of others, as well as their own
c. the sensitivities of others and what it means to be sensitive
d. how to make responsible decisions. (p. 436)

To teach in such areas, schools will need to provide information and experiences that encourage the development of values, sensitivities and feelings. Gifted students, with their often heightened levels of sensitivity and leadership potential, need teachers to help them analyze and develop their values, explore and come to terms with their feelings, cultivate and deepen their sensitivities and hone their decision making.

Institutions of Socialization

Thus, contrary to what many may think, schools have always had responsibility for affective learning. Schools everywhere were established as socializing institutions, for the purpose of transmitting cultural values and instilling a commitment to those values. John Dewey (1933) stated that the aim of education is growth and development in intellectual and moral dimensions. American schools, in addition to teaching knowledge and skills, were intended to teach cultural expectations — what the culture values and the behaviors that are expected of its members (Taba, 1962).

Of course, schools are not the only socializing institution that provides affective education; families, churches, peer groups, older generations, traditions, rituals, print and broadcast media do so as well. But in our rapidly changing society, many institutions have changed drastically, and their educational roles are less clear. Conversely, some institutions, such as broadcast media and computers, have more strength and are becoming increasingly more powerful in instilling values. Nathan (1996) reports that students spend 900 hours per year in school and 1,820 hours watching television. As interactive media becomes more pervasive, its influence will exceed that of television. In response to such changes, society is turning more directly toward schools, and affective education has been championed in the growing interest in building character. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) helped to develop an organizational initiative in character education and dedicated an issue of *Educational Leadership* to that topic (35[4],1993).

Individuals and groups express public concern about the teaching of values and aspects of the affective domain, sometimes saying schools should not teach values, that they should be taught at home or through a church. However, their concern is not whether schools should teach values, but which ones they should teach. Etzioni (1993) states that we cannot afford to turn our backs on those who provide us a moral and religious conscience. He reminds us that to object to the moral voice of the community, and to the moral encouragement it provides, is to oppose the social glue that helps hold the moral order together.

When most people in a society or local community agree on a value, schools are expected to teach about it, either advocating for or cautioning against it. Schools are expected to support honesty, justice and equality, while opposing murder, racial and sexual discrimination and cheating. If a value is less broadly accepted or

(Continued on next page)

Search for Meaning

Continued from page 9

rejected in a community, schools may be expected to teach about it, without advocating or rejecting it. Educators who provide effective instruction concerning values, feelings, sensitivities and responsible decision making plan carefully and realize that providing information is only part of the task. They know that teaching through example, using textual sets built around broad themes such as change or courage, studying case histories of leaders and the setting of individual expectations for students represent effective ways to meet the affective needs of students (Purkey, 1984; Sisk, 1987; Elias & Clabby,1992; Canfield & Siccone, 1993).

In today's complex and sometimes bewildering world, the gifted face multiple choices. They need a strong sense of direction and identity to successfully maneuver within these options. Attention to affective needs through education is essential for gifted children and youth to further develop their capacities to reason (Sisk, 1982). Gifted students' fund of information, critical sensitivity and high sense of worthy values enable them to readily sense the link between the past and the present and that they can be engaged in helping to shape their futures. To accomplish this, gifted students need to build an understanding of their emotional selves within a relevant curriculum that provides for critical reflection of the moral and ethical aspects of social compassion and justice. This is critical for gifted adolescents who are grappling with personal growth and development within the context of the continued growth and development of society.

Importance of Understanding the Emotional Self

Consciousness of self is not purely an intellectual idea; the self is experienced as a thinking-intuiting-feeling-acting unit (Shallcross & Sisk, 1985). The thinking self uses the power of judgment, inference, logic and reason, and the intuiting self perceives immediate cognition and knowledge. The feeling or emotional self is the affective part of consciousness and the acting self responds to knowledge and experience. Much of self-awareness develops through involvement with others.

Shallcross and Sisk (1985) developed a model for conceptualizing self development, depicted in Figure 1. Sensory perception includes sensory experiences: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, feeling and smelling. Highly curious and alert gifted students gather sensory information,

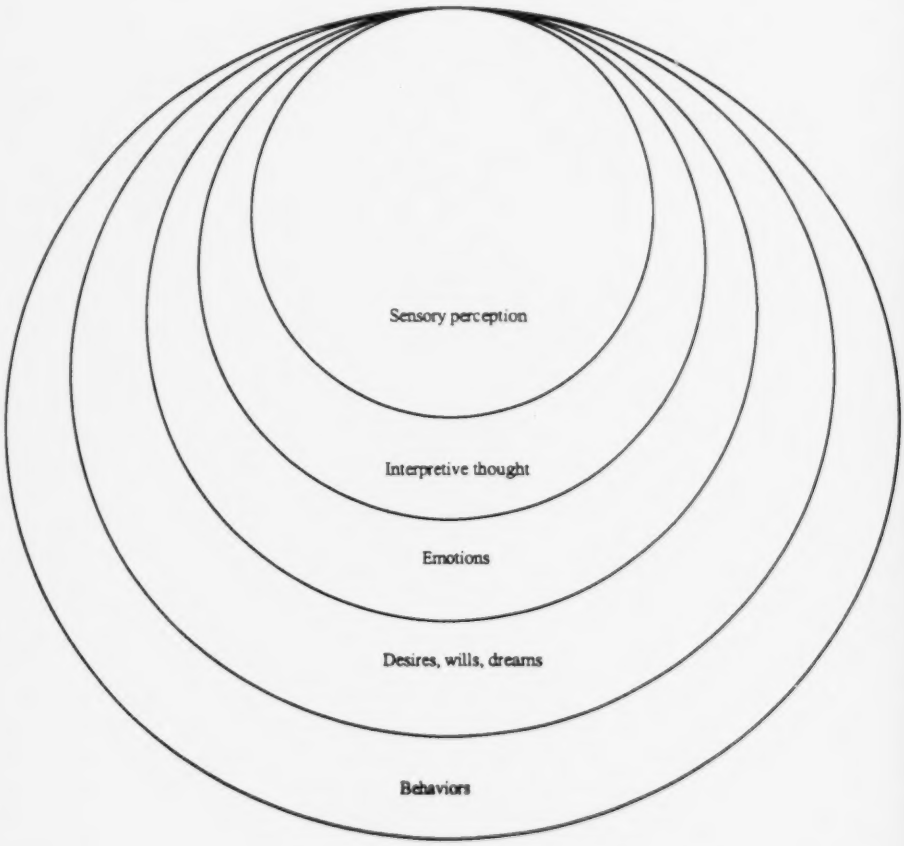

Figure 1

A model for self-awareness.
Shallcross, D. & Sisk, D.A. (1985). *The Growing Person.* Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited. Reprinted by permission.

(Continued on next page)

Search for Meaning

Continued from page 10

interpret and use this information to make connections with past information or experiences. Interpretative thinking is influenced by emotions surrounding the information or the experience being perceived, and emotions drive wishes, desires and dreams, resulting in action or behavior.

Information contained in awareness is not always readily available. One way to build greater self-awareness is to make a conscious effort to examine and experience the components of the model: *sensing, interpreting, emoting, desiring and behaving.*

Sensory Perception

Unfinished Sensory Thoughts is an activity designed to develop sensory perception in which students are encouraged to finish sensory thoughts. This may be done by asking students either to take turns sharing completed thoughts in a group or to respond individually, completing all sentences themselves. Beginning with the topic "Walk in the Woods" and using the unfinished sensory thoughts "I see..., I hear..., I touch..., I feel...," a gifted 7 year old completed the activity with the following:

Walk in the Woods
I see the sun shining in the trees
I hear the call of the birds
I touch the shaggy bark of the old oak
I feel good inside.

Using a different topic, a 9-year-old gifted student wrote:

A Walk in Space
I see the Moon man approaching
I hear his words and I do not understand
I touch my invisible ray button
I feel safe, as he cannot see me.
I see him looking surprised
I hear him call out
I touch my home ray button
I feel safe in my home.
(Sisk, 1987, pp. 262-263)

In completing these beginnings, gifted students are directed to concentrate on sensory experiences; the product is simple poetry, full of data. Gifted students enjoy hearing one another's poems and inspire and re-inspire one another as they work together.

Interpretation

Senses supply information and what we do with this data involves interpretation. For example, a cat is walking toward a house, meowing loudly and carrying a limp kitten in its mouth. The sensory data may be interpreted as: The mother cat is sad as she walks back to the house. She's carrying her seriously injured kitten home to be helped. Another interpretation might be that the mother cat found her kitten exploring the outdoors. The kitten was naughty to leave, and the mother cat is upset and bringing it home.

Both interpretations were written by 3rd-grade students in a thinking skills lesson. Interpretation is a function of reality, as each student perceives it. Interpretation skills enable gifted students to talk, listen and struggle with difficult issues across vast differences of points of view and experiences. Very often interpretations we make are correct and provide useful data for action. However, when they are incorrect, sensory information needs to be separated from the interpretation, an important concept for teachers to help their students understand.

Role Playing also helps build interpretative skills. One method students enjoy is using data cards labeled: What, Where and When. Cards are distributed and after 60 seconds of preparation, students are asked to role play the indicated action. Some favorites are:

- You are a robot lost in the rain at night.
- You are a princess in New York City at dawn.
- You are a mosquito surrounded by cans of Raid in a modern kitchen.

Follow-up questions might be: Did everyone participate? Were groups able to interpret the actions of one another? Did groups correctly demonstrate their interpretations from the sensory data?

Feelings and Emotions

Asking gifted youngsters to express feelings and emotions such as pleasure, comfort, calm, satisfaction, anger, nervousness and eagerness helps them determine how accurately they perceive responses. Role playing can also be useful in exploring emotions. A helpful strategy is Double Technique, an activity in which one student portrays a conflict situation, with another playing the focus individual's other self. The objective is to explore as many different moods and psychological perspectives as possible. Gifted students often enjoy role playing, particularly if there are opportunities for debriefing and discussion. It is good to keep in mind that many young people mirror their significant adults and, if they have been exposed to models who withhold emotions, may be reluctant to share emotions and feelings. Another way to elicit the sharing of emotions and feelings is by writing in journals or daily logs. One teacher provides her students

(Continued on next page)

Search for Meaning

Continued from page 11

with large envelopes, taped to their desks, to hold journals and the red flags used to indicate when individuals wish to share feelings, emotions or experiences.

A gifted middle school student noted in her journal:

I was really upset in class today when I didn't get to be team leader. I thought I was going to cry, but then I remembered how much Sara wanted the job and I decided to volunteer to be her assistant. She said yes and now I feel much better. I guess I don't have to be first all of the time. Was that what you meant about not always tooting your own horn? I'm getting there. Thanks!

This student communicates feelings and a growing insight into her behavior and that of others. Such informal communication helps teachers to better understand student concerns. It is apparent that this teacher serves as a role model and that her students are learning not so much from what she says, or even from what she does, but from her way of being, from qualities and values integral to her approach to life and teaching.

Sometimes feelings are so important that we have difficulty employing our intellects. Gifted students, with their often keen sensitivity and strong sense of ego, may experience this problem. The challenge for teachers is how to help them use their emotions in positive ways. To accomplish this, Canfield and Siccone (1993) recommend a responsible teacher, one who:

- responds, not reacts
- accepts, not judges
- finds solutions, not fault
- focuses on purpose, not on position
- seeks excellence, not expedience
- empowers, not controls.

(p.31)

Responsible teachers operate from conscious awareness and choice. Most teachers have an inner sense of rightness about how to guide students to understand their emotions; however, it is important for teachers to act from a sense of wholeness and avoid their own potentially harmful emotional discharges. In a responsible classroom, the emphasis is on expressing authenticity, integrity and strength.

A teaching strategy to help build an interactive and responsive learning classroom in which gifted young people work at understanding emotions and feelings is Bibliotherapy. By employing their imaginations, they can experience problems vicariously without any real-life consequences. Through this activity, youngsters identify with book characters who are experiencing similar problems to ones they may have. As emotional and social issues are dealt with in story form, readers experience catharsis, release of emotional or psychological tension and gain insight into their own or similar difficulties. (For more specifics on Bibliotherapy, see Tactics, p. 3.)

Desire/Intention/Will

Desires represent what we want to accomplish, intention is movement toward or away from something, and will represents our decision. Gifted students may be aware of desires and will in their intentions, but those same things may also be hidden. In some cases, desires, intentions and will may be in conflict with one another. For example, gifted students want to be liked by other students, but in addition they often want to win and be the best. Deciding which intention is the more important can be difficult; intentions can be tested by becoming more aware of behavior and feelings. One response or behavior may bring warm, satisfying feelings, while another may bring irritation and unhappiness. A common conflict of gifted students is deciding between getting good grades or going for popularity. By observing action in role playing or video tapes of group interactions, individuals can learn to interpret facial expressions, posture, voice characteristics and actions to better understand desires, intentions and will as they relate to behavior. They also can learn how to listen, build on ideas, express emotions and socially interact. As gifted students become more aware of themselves, they can employ this knowledge in understanding others.

Expressing Emotions

All students need socially acceptable mechanisms to share feelings, and in a verbally oriented society gifted students, with their often high verbal abilities, need the right words to convey their emotions. By owning statements and using "I" statements, gifted young people can learn to recognize the connection between expressing and owning feelings.

As an opportunity for practicing "I" statements, Boundary Breaking follows simple ground rules:

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Everyone has the right to say pass, if more time is needed to think, or choose not to take part.
3. No one is allowed to criticize, interrupt or laugh at another

(Continued on next page)

Search for Meaning

Continued from page 12

person's response.
4. All responses are accepted; there are no right or wrong responses.
5. Everyone gets a turn, following a pattern to the left or right of the circle.
6. The leader takes a turn along with the group members.
7. The group should be limited to no more than 10.
8. Questions are asked in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Questions that have proved successful in this activity include:

- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- If you could be any famous person in history, whom would you be?
- What is one trait you feel people admire about you?
- What is one trait you feel people dislike about you?
- If you could visit any part of the world, where would you go?
- If you could change anything about the world, what would you change?
- If you could be any kind of animal, what would you like to be?

Participants may need to be reminded of the ground rules, but they quickly internalize the underlying structure and protect the mutual acceptance, understanding and trust that evolve in the activity. In Boundary Breaking, gifted students can express feelings without judgment and experience a sense of dignity and worth that counterbalances any negative experiences they may have endured in or out of the classroom.

Many gifted students make little or no effort to hide their differences and, consequently, may have difficulty establishing positive relationships with other students, teachers and parents. Divergent thinking and action are not always appreciated, and in the minds of too many educators the gifted are "off the wall." In addition, gifted students often are sensitive to issues other students are not concerned about and may be perceived as being self righteous or self serving. When gifted students discuss high standards of truth and morality and point out that others don't measure up, they may be rejected by fellow students. In Boundary Breaking, gifted students hear different points of view that can provide new material for them to use in refining and developing their standards of behavior and action.

The value of a pedagogy of relevance for gifted students will be measured in our nation's ability or inability to create a world that is responsive to the needs of all human beings. The challenge for educators and parents of the gifted is how to best provide the greatest opportunity for these youngsters to develop meaning and value from their educational experiences. Their education must include both advanced cognitive material *and* a related and meaningful affective dimension in a pedagogy of true relevance. It is a challenge we can no longer deny.

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Affective Needs

Continued from page 1

student even more. Many of these stereotypes have been passed down through generations because of ignorance of facts or ongoing negative attitudes.

These attitudes can have a negative effect on the academic performance of students from different cultural backgrounds. Spielberger, Gonzales & Fletcher (1976) have noted that cognitive and affective factors influence the learning process, and variables such as motivation, emotion conation (i.e. striving, trying, persistence, will power) are listed as powerful influences on the success or failure in test-taking. Whereas these variables can be found to affect all cultural groups, other variables such as isolation from the mainstream, poor home support and limited non-school enrichment opportunities add other challenging dimensions to the total developmental process of culturally diverse students.

Traditionally, IQ tests or scores have been a source of concern in education, but according to Goleman (1995), "The lopsided scientific vision of an emotionally flat mental life which has guided the last 80 years of research on intelligence is gradually changing as psychology has begun to recognize the essential role of feeling in thinking" (p. 41). Shallcross and Sisk (1985) also noted a concern that parallels that of Goleman when they reported the feelings of Phillipe Dupont who said that although "...physical and intellectual functions have not been given over to machines... [this] machine world has not taken over our emotional and spiritual realms" (p. 28).

In considering programs for the gifted, the affective impact of each part of the planning framework (Baldwin, 1991) on gifted students from culturally diverse backgrounds must be considered. In deciding *who* is gifted, a broader concept must be embraced. **To consider a single IQ score as the only indicator of giftedness ignores the experiential background of culturally diverse students and thus sets the stage for a rejection which begins the vicious cycle of low self esteem.** Gardner (cited in Goleman, 1995) has suggested that there are many more intelligences that we should consider in identifying or defining giftedness. According to Goleman, some refer to Gardner's ideas as "personal intelligences...[with] the common thread being the goal of raising the level of social and emotional competence in children" (p. 262).

For minority populations, this idea of Gardner's is particularly important in the process of enhancing the self-concept of these students and providing more accurate information on the ability levels present. During the 80s and 90s there have been heated discussions on the rankings of certain minority groups according to specified assessment techniques. One of the hottest sources of discussion has been *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Hernstein & Murray, 1994). For those of us who have struggled for years to remove the elitist concept of giftedness and encourage the general population to view giftedness as a construct that can be represented by indices other than IQ scores, this book looms large in the battle to develop a concept of giftedness and an identification process which proposes another method for identifying students.

The Baldwin Identification Matrix was developed out of the experiences the author had as a teacher of African-American students in a segregated community. Although the various IQ scores given these students did not classify them as gifted, advocacy for their inclusion in programs for the gifted provided an opportunity for the development of dormant abilities and the enhancement of self-concept. These students' outstanding success offers another perspective on two of the six conclusions upon which Hernstein and Murray centered their discussions in *The Bell Curve*. These two were, "IQ scores match, to a first degree, whatever it is that people mean when they use the word intelligent or smart in ordinary language," and "IQ scores are stable, although not perfectly so, over much of a person's life" (p. 22-23).

The Baldwin Identification Matrix (Figure 1) along with more recent formats by Frasier (1990) has been designed to look at an individual's total profile rather than a single IQ score. These two procedures have provided a more in-depth look at the potential/abilities of minority-group young people.

The results of a teaching experience which prompted the development of the Baldwin Matrix is shown in a longitudinal study of 26 students selected to participate in a gifted class during a period of time immediately preceding integration in America's southern states. The initial achievement and IQ scores of these students

(Continued on next page)

Affective Needs

Continued from page 14

ranged from 100 to 180, with the median score being 118. Several of these students, when selected, were operating at grade level (grade 4), with some seriously underachieving and a few operating above grade level. The usual cut-off IQ score for admission to gifted programs was 130; only three of these students would have been included in these programs had there been no advocate for their inclusion. After working in a stimulating environment, the students blossomed into achievers who would have defied predictions made in *The Bell Curve*. If, however, these students had not experienced the challenges offered them, it is possible they would have received a minimum of educational opportunity or even dropped out.

In deciding goals (*what to teach*), it is important that they come from a belief that within a classroom environment students of all ethnic groups will benefit from curriculum that is inclusive of materials from different cultures. The positive affective impact of cross-cultural inclusions in the curriculum will be borne out in the pride displayed by students of diverse cultures and in the acceptance of each group's cultures.

For children of minority groups the inclusion of basic assumptions, such as the following, in the overall planning guide will form the basis for developing specific classroom delivery objectives.

- Giftedness expressed in one dimension is just as important as giftedness expressed in another.
- Giftedness can be expressed through a variety of behaviors.
- A total-ability profile is crucial in educational planning for the gifted child (Baldwin, 1984).

It is important that the *what* be established to guide the *how*. An example of the *what* begins with propositions such as the following:

- The development of a positive concept for children of different ethnic groups unlocks potential ability heretofore sublimated.
- Historical and contemporary events that recognize the contributions of a wide range of people broadens the scope of knowledge with which students can become involved.

From propositions, goals can flow as indicated with the examples below:

- To help students of all ethnic groups become aware of hidden misconceptions about each group.
- To develop the self-concept of students of color through the development of trust and respect from students in all ethnic groups.
- To provide gifted students opportunities for differentiated curriculum experiences which draw upon their cultures.

From the goals, students move toward more *specific objectives*, such as:

- Students will be able to analyze and express inconsistencies in stereotypical behavior.
- Students will be able to develop an appreciation of the interdependence of all ethnic groups.
- Students will be able to acquire the concept of cause and effect in the analysis of events in history.

Teaching strategies (*how to teach*) become the crucial part of the framework because it is here that the interaction between teacher and peers occurs. Along with the usual suggestions regarding the use of upper-level questioning techniques, brainstorming, problem solving techniques and creative production, Goleman (1995) has recommended specific activities such as games of cooperation and methods of pulling the plug on hostile reactions in the classroom. Explosive behaviors often indicate a lack of attention to specific needs of students or frustration resulting from low self esteem.

(Continued on page 18)

Creative Ventures

Quilts, Part IV

Creative Thinking

On this final voyage of discovery with quilts, we investigate the creative expression of talented students in using quilt themes and motifs to celebrate history and their own families.

Talented artists such as Harriet Powers (*Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers,* 1993, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) have used needle, thread and cloth to portray Biblical and many other subjects in the story quilts they fashioned. Today, students can use paper, colored markers and a nearly limitless array of materials to create classroom "patchwork quilts" based upon imaginative recreations of episodes they read about in biography or fiction. If the class is reading biographies of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., each student can create a colorful drawing of a singularly important event in his life. The students' drawings can then be ordered chronologically and spatially to represent a giant "patchwork quilt" commemorating Dr. King's life and his accomplishments. Another class, reading Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* (New York: Bradbury Press, 1987), might fashion a similar "quilt," piecing together student-generated art panels of events central to the fictional adventure story of Brian Robeson.

Over the centuries women have made quilts to keep people warm, to bundle babies and to decorate the walls of their homes. Creating an ABC quilt motif mural for the classroom wall (or, alternatively, an ABC quilt book) would seem to be an appropriate way of celebrating the greatness of women. Each student would create a quilt square commemorating, alphabetically, 26 outstanding women from history or contemporary life. "A Is for Abigail Adams" the first square might read. That student might draw a silhouette or cameo featuring a likeness of Abigail Adams along with symbols representative of Mrs. Adams' many contributions in early American history. The "B" quilt square might be a visual celebration of a more recent First Lady, Barbara Bush, and so on.

Students can also work together to create a classroom quilt that is a celebration of family. Each student is given a square sheet of paper to serve as a quilt block, then directed to take the squares home along with instructions to involve the whole family in creating an original quilt block design. Families could use glitter, markers, buttons, photographs, cloth, stickers and other materials in creating a block representative of their lives together. When all the family blocks are completed, students work together to arrange them into a visually satisfying classroom family "quilt." Small holes are punched along the sides of the blocks, then "sewn" together using ribbon, lace, yarn or other material. Paper or cloth loops can be created at the top of the "quilt" and a dowel rod slipped through the loops for effective quilt hanging. The completed project then becomes a powerful symbolic statement of how parents, children and the school work together to create good education. This same idea works well for family reunions, too, with each family designing a 12-inch square. All the squares are assembled and displayed when the families join together for their reunion.

Indeed, there are as many ways to use quilts as creative inspiration as there are quilt creations in our culture and history!

Jerry Flack, President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, is the author of ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

Above and Beyond

A Teacher/Parent Partnership for Curriculum Differentiation

The goal of parents and teachers working together to create an optimum learning environment for gifted students can be enhanced by the use of a Differentiated Learning Plan (DLP). In the same way as Individual Education Plans (IEP) are prepared and used for other students with exceptional learning needs, a yearly DLP for gifted students creates a purposeful pattern for providing challenging learning experiences beyond the regular curriculum. Since gifted students are just as atypical as kids with learning difficulties, it is reasonable to expect some modification of the grade-appropriate curriculum.

When my husband Neil was a school superintendent, he and his staff designed a DLP for a profoundly gifted student whose program required a combination of enrichment and acceleration. However, formulating DLPs for all students who need differentiation of one or more areas of learning is perfectly appropriate, if not advisable.

Every spring a DLP should be negotiated and ready for use the following fall as school begins. Part of the plan should include progress meetings scheduled for the beginning of the second semester.

Whenever parents, students and teachers meet, the discussion should center on the specific accommodations agreed to in the DLP. In this way, requests for differentiation need not be accompanied by the often strong emotions which can sometimes lead to accusations and defensive responses. Since all interested parties expect a yearly plan, providing appropriate curriculum extensions becomes a comfortable and natural process.

A prototype of a DLP follows. Users can easily modify it, as necessary, in meeting particular needs.

Page 1: TASKS CHART: Describes responsibilities of all parties in the student's academic subject areas.

SUBJECT AREAS	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	PARENTS	COUNSELOR/ SOCIAL WORKER	NEXT SCHOOL

Page 2: TASKS CHART: Describes concerns for the student's social/emotional adjustment.

CONCERNS	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	PARENTS	COUNSELOR/ SOCIAL WORKER	NEXT SCHOOL

Page 3: Itemizes and describes the student's alternate learning projects and activities for the school year.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

****

Yearly Differentiated Learning Plan (DLP)

*STUDENT'S NAME*_____

*AGE*_____ *YEAR IN SCHOOL*_____

*PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE(S)*_____

*AREAS OF INTENSE INTEREST*_____

*SUBJECTS IN WHICH COMPACTING HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT*_____

DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENTIATION (only those that apply)

LANGUAGE ARTS/FOREIGN LANGUAGE
SOCIAL STUDIES
MATHEMATICS
SCIENCE
FINE/HOME ARTS
PHYSICAL EDUCATION
OTHER
INDEPENDENT STUDIES
RECOMMENDATION FOR NEXT YEAR
TEACHERS INVOLVED IN PLAN

Susan Winebrenner, from Illinois, presents workshops on a variety of topics, but her first love is teaching gifted children. She is the author of ***Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.***

Affective Needs

Continued from page 15

There are three basic areas teachers can focus on to accomplish the goals and specific objectives such as those listed above. One is the enhancement of all students' *sensitivity* through discussion of their experiences and the playing of role reversal games. Another comes in making *information* available to students from multiple sources, a teaching model that provides facts about various events (historical and contemporary). Strategies such as talks with local historians, library and Internet research, time capsule strategies and role assumption reveal information not included or not touched on in depth in the usual textbooks.

The third area for teachers to use in fulfilling the goals and specific objectives is the use of *concept development.* These techniques involve using ethnic information and content from a variety of cultures in order to teach a concept. Socio-political parallels, language structures, family life and literary construction are just a few examples of strategies that will help students learn about other cultures while gaining mastery of a concept. If a teacher's objective is to have students understand ways in which a poet uses environment to communicate a concept of the times, language, etc., poems by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Robert Burns or Maya Angelou could prove useful. Selections of their poems can acquaint students with literature of the times, the culture from which the poet came and the language used to provide color, feel and heart of the work.

In achieving emotional well being for culturally diverse students, an understanding and non-prejudicial approach to discovering and developing their talents is required. It is through positive modeling and sincere concern and care in teaching that affective and cognitive needs can be fully realized. All teachers can become advocates, regardless of cultural backgrounds of students in their classrooms. The examples given above are suggestions for beginnings, offered as guides for those who have the opportunity to work with minority students and/or have the responsibility of enlightening young people of all cultures. Such enlightenment initiates a positive chain reaction which can eventually produce the affective/emotional well being of *all* children.

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(Continued on page 19)

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Continued from page 18

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Baldwin Identification Matrix 2

Student_____Birthdate_____Age___Sex___Grade___Date_____

	Area	Assessment Items
1.	Cognitive	1.1 General IQ
		1.2
		1.3
		1.4
		1.5
		Total Cognitive
2.	Psychosocial	2.1
		2.2
		2.3
		2.4
		2.5
		Total Psychosocial
3.	Creative/ Products	3.1
		3.2
		3.3
		3.4
		3.5
		Total Creative Products
4.	Psychomotor	4.1
		4.2
		4.3
		4.4
		4.5
		Total Psychomotor
5.	Motivation	5.1
		5.2
		5.3
		5.4
		5.5
		Total Motivation
6.	Creative Problem-Solving	6.1
		6.2
		6.3
		6.4
		6.5
		Total Creative Problem-Solving
		Matrix Totals Student Totals

Figure 1

The Baldwin Identification Matrix 2 includes six areas which coincide with the author's definition of identifiable aspects of giftedness On the matrix chart each area of the definition includes five possible opportunities for the examiner to assess that ability. Each area of the assessment items will be given a rating of 1-5. 5 being the highest. Only a sample of inclusions of the matrix are shown here. Adapted with permission from Alexinia Baldwin, 1996.

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